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THE METAPHYSICS OF BEING
OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS
in a Historical Perspective

THE METAPHYSICS OF BEING OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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BY

LEO J. ELDERS S.V.D.

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Kerkrade, November 1, 1991 L.J. Elders s.v.d.

INTRODUCTION

Origin and Use of the Term 'Metaphysics'

Some authors use the term metaphysics in a broad sense to refer to any fundamental investigation of reality. For example, Albert Camus speaks of a metaphysical revolt by man against his situation in life and Charles Péguy asserts that everyone, even though he may not admit it, has a metaphysics[1]. According to Gabriel Marcel, one is concerned with metaphysics from the moment one discovers that one's own standpoint regarding reality is untenable and attempts to rectify this situation[2].

Used in this sense the term appears to be more or less identical with what is generally called philosophy, but there is also a usage of the term in the sense of a specific branch of philosophical studies: metaphysics does not consider empirical being but what is hidden beneath it. Used in this sense, some understand it as aporetics (N. Hartmann; P. Aubenque) or as the science of principles on which cosmology, psychology and natural theology are based (Ch. Wolff).

Others take it to be the study of a domain of being which is not subject to genuine scientific research but can only be surveyed in an approximative way. Needless to say that this view easily leads to a reduction of metaphysics to an aesthetic activity. Finally the term is also used to denote the science of being as being. In this sense metaphysics has a clearly defined meaning as will be seen below.

The original use of the term metaphysics has been ascribed to Andronicus of Rhodes who arranged in order and published the schoolwritings of Aristotle as these were known in the first century B.C. He is supposed to have given the name "writings coming after those on natural science" (τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά) to a number of treatises the content of which varied considerably. From this expression the word metaphysics was formed[3]. Alexander of Aphrodisias states that we are dealing here with things which "for us" come later but which, considered in themselves, are more fundamental than the material world[4]. The reason

[1] Quoted from M. Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, p. 53.
[2] *Journal métaphysique*, p.279.
[3] See I. Düring, *Aristoteles. Darstellung und Interpretation seines Denkens*, Heidelberg 1966, pp.591f.
[4] *In Metaphysicam* 171, 6.

why Andronicus did not adopt the title "first philosophy" apparently is that this Aristotelian expression denoted a particular treatise within a group of *pragmateiai*, each of which had a title of its own.[5]

However, according to P. Moraux the term is much older and figured in the Alexandrian lists of Aristotle's works[6]. It is noteworthy that Aristotle himself does not use the term but speaks of "first philosophy", while Theophrastus in the introduction to his *Metaphysics* uses the expression "the study of the first things". H. Reiner asserts that Eudemus coined the term[7], but does not adduce any real evidence for his claim.

It is not improbable that for pedagogical reasons certain treatises from the Aristotelian *Corpus* of writings were studied after physics had been dealt with and that this custom contributed to the development of the term metaphysics. In later centuries commentators from the Neoplatonic School also explained the term in the sense that principles above (ὑπέρ) or beyond (ἐπέκεινα) material reality constitute the subject of metaphysics[8]. In the Platonic view imperishable being is prior to things belonging to the world of change; man must ascend from that which is perceptible to the reality beyond the range of the senses[9].

In the seventeenth century the term 'ontology' made its appearance in the writings of R. Goclenius[10] and J. Clauberg[11]. These authors apparently intended to separate off the science of being in general from theology by means of this term and to make it the foundation of the new positive sciences. Following this line Ch. Wolff worked out an ontology which would be an introduction to cosmology, psychology and natural theology.

A Concise History of Metaphysics

Some historians have seen in Anaximander the founder of metaphysics arguing that he ascribed the origin of everything to the indefinite (i.e., he no longer resorted to a specific element). Usually, however, Parmenides is viewed as the first metaphysician because in an attempt at understanding reality he left behind the physical world and had an intuition of being of profound significance. For this very reason Plato, in his dialogues, usually makes a member of the Eleatic School deal with questions of being. As is known, Plato himself defined the character of the supreme science more precisely by making the world of ideas its object of investigation. He devised a theory of the relationship of the ideas to one another, deriving them from two primordial principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad (also called the Large and (the) Small or the Infinite). Aristotle, however, is the philosopher who first gave a name to this science and, to a certain extent, described its nature (first philosophy).

[5] See V. Décarie, "Le titre de la «Métaphysique»", in *Herméneutique et ontologie. Hommage à P.Aubenque*, Paris 1990, 121-125.

[6] *Les listes anciennes des ouvrages d'Aristote*, Louvain 1951, p.315.

[7] "Die Entstehung und ursprüngliche Bedeutung des Namens Metaphysik", in *Zeitschrift f.metaph.Forschung* 8(1954) 210-237.

[8] Philoponus, *In Categ.* 5, 1-6; Simplicius, *In Physicam*, 1, 17-21.

[9] *Republic* 516C.

[10] *Lexicon philosophicum quo tamquam clave philosophiae fores aperiuntur*, Frankfurt a.M. 1613, p.16.

[11] *Ontosophia*, c.1 (1656).

Aristotle has left us a treatise in fourteen books which is a collection of independent tracts rather than one coherent systematic study. In Book A, chs. 1 and 2, Aristotle speaks of a particular form of knowledge, wisdom, σοφία, which deals with primary causes. Its aim is not practical; it is sought for the sake of knowledge alone. It is the most divine science because it is the science most worthy of God and is the science of the first causes; God is the cause of all things. This wisdom does not serve any utilitarian end; it is the best of all sciences.

Book B is a profound treatise of a number of fundamental problems in philosophy, the solution to which is postponed until later. For this reason some commentators are of the opinion that according to Aristotle metaphysics should be aporetics[12].

The first two chapters of Book Γ (IV) introduce the science of being *qua* being which differs from other sciences in that the latter examine particular areas of being. Aristotle draws attention to the fact that being has numerous meanings, but that all of these are related to substance. For this reason first philosophy must examine the principles of substances.

Book E (VI) presents the well known division of sciences into theoretical, practical and productive sciences and proceeds to subdivide the theoretical sciences according to the subjects studied by them: the things considered by physics exist on their own but are not unchangeable; mathematics studies unchangeable objects which do not exist by themselves, while "theology" considers things which exist on themselves (are separated from matter) and are unchangeable. The text of this first chapter of Book E is not without some serious difficulties[13]. Furthermore, a division of reality into spheres of being appears to

[12] See Pierre Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, Paris 1962, 250ff.

[13] See our "Aristote et l'objet de la métaphysique", in *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 60(1962) 166-183; *Faith and Science. An Introduction to St Thomas' Expositio in Boethii De Trinitate*, Rome 1974, pp.99-102. For a general survey cf. V. Décarie, *L'objet de la métaphysique selon Aristote*, Montréal-Paris 1961.

underlie this threefold division of the sciences. Werner Jaeger is possibly right in suspecting the influence of Platonic theories. There is a certain discrepancy between what is called theology here and the science of being *qua* being in Book IV. Whereas in Jaeger's opinion Book IV reflects Aristotle's later view (as distinct from that of his so-called Platonic period), in recent decades it has been pointed out repeatedly that Bk IV chs 1 and 2 contain many early elements and recall Plato's reduction of the Ideas to contrary first principles.

However this may be, the discrepancy had consequences for later views and has led to discussions as to what is the real subject matter of metaphysics: the highest being (God) or being in general. Alexander of Aphrodisias defends the latter view: metaphysics is distinct from other sciences by the fact that it examines being rather than a particular area of being[14]. In his commentary on Book VI (the authenticity of which is questionable) he says, following the text of Aristotle, that the higher and more valuable being is the subject matter of first philosophy[15].

According to Asclepius the study of being *qua* being is that of the highest reality[16] and metaphysics is really theology. Philoponus and Simplicius follow the same line of interpretation[17]. This Neoplatonic theory was so widespread that it was generally held to be the only correct view; it was also expressed in spatial terms, viz. our world depends on an invisible world which lies above it. But it provoked reactions from such empiricists as David Hume who refused to look outside this material world for its foundation[18].

Of the great Arab philosophers Avicenna opts for the interpetation which sees the science of being *qua* being as the genuine metaphysics; God is not the subject matter of this science but is connected with it to the extent that that the inquiries involved lead among other things to the acceptance of the existence of God[19]. Averroes, on the other hand, asserts that God is the proper subject of metaphysics but that in a sense this

[14] *In Metaphysicam* 11,6; 239, 16. 23.

[15] *In Metaphysicam* 447, 24-36.

[16] *In Metaph.* 225, 15-17.

[17] Philoponus, *In Categ. 5, 1-6; Simplicius, In Physicam* 1, 17-21. See K. Kremer, *Der Metaphysikbegriff in den Aristoteleskommentaren der Ammonius-Schule. BGPhThMA 39,1*, *Münster* 1960.

[18] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, II 408 (edit. Green-Grose): "If the material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other and so on without end. It were better therefore never to look beyond the present material world".

[19] *Metaphysica* I, c.2 (*Liber de philosophia prima* (Van Riet) p.12: "Igitur ostensum est tibi ex his omnibus quod ens inquantum est ens, est commune omnibus et quod ipsum debet poni subiectum huius magisterii".

that God is the proper subject of metaphysics but that in a sense this science also studies material being[20].

A different view is found in St. Albert the Great: not God but being *qua* being is the subject matter of metaphysics, but he understands being in the sense of "the first emanation from God and the first created thing", i.e. he interprets Aristotle in a Neoplatonic and Christian manner[21]. Although Albert states in some passages that God is not the subject of metaphysics, in other texts of his *Metaphysics* he lists the different parts of its subject matter; one of these are those things which in their being are separated from matter[22]. His position is not particularly clear. One may nevertheless point out two valuable elements in his account of the problem: emphasis is placed on being as the real subject of metaphysics while this science is also referring to the entire scale of beings, material things as well as God.

Aquinas' concept of metaphysics will be dealt with below. At this point it is, however, worth mentioning that Thomas made clear how this philosophical discipline is constituted, determined its nature and developed metaphysics into a doctrine of being. While confirming the unity of metaphysics he also explains how God is studied in this discipline.

Duns Scotus teaches that the *ens commune* is the subject of metaphysics. This, however, means entirely undifferentiated being which is common both to God and to creatures. Being (*esse*) is one of the attributes of the individual being. Therefore metaphysics studies essence (*esse quidditativum*) and not being which lies outside essence[23]. By considering being, understood in this way, the subject of metaphysics Scotus succeeds in making metaphysics an absolutely necessary science: both theology and philosophy are further determinations of the primary and fundamental knowledge of being in general. According to Scotus the concept of being is presupposed by every other concept. In this way, however, God is made dependent on our human concept of being even if no concept comprehends God[24].

[20] Averroes, *In Physicam*, com.83: "qui dicit quod prima philosophia nititur declarare entia separabilia esse, peccat. Haec enim entia sunt subiecta primae philosophiae".

[21] See L. Elders, "La naturaleza de la metafísica según San Alberto Magno y Santo Tomás de Aquino", in *Scripta theologica* (Pamplona) 12 (1980, 547-561. See also G. Wieland, *Untersuchungen zum Seinsbegriff im Metaphysikkommentar Alberts des Großen. BGphThMA, NF*, Münster 1972.

[22] *O.c.*, I, tract.1, c.11 (Geyer 28, 61).

[23] *Quaest. in Metaph.* I, 1, n. 33: "Ens inquantum ens potest habere passionem aliquam quae est extra essentiam eius inquantum est ens; sicut esse unum vel multa, actus vel potentia est extra essentiam cuiuslibet inquantum est ens sive quid in se".

[24] See J. Owens, "Up to what point is God included in the metaphysics of Duns Scotus?", in *Mediaeval Studies* X (1948), 163-177; E. Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot. Introduction à ses*

Since our review is limited to the major philosophers, we must now mention Suarez. This Spanish philosopher and metaphysician bids farewell to the usual literary form of a paraphrase or commentary of the text of Aristotle and develops an extensive treatise which because of its merits (and its use in numerous Jesuit colleges) exercised a substantial influence for over two hundred years. Suarez reproaches Scotus for having made our human way of conceiving being (*ens*) the way in which things really are. Suarez himself introduces a distinction between the concept of being and the content of being in existing things[25]. The concept of being which conceives being as a noun (and which abstracts from the question of whether what is denoted by this noun exists or not) is the object of metaphysics. As signified by this concept being has the highest degree of universality[26]. However, this position of Suarez turns metaphysics into a study of essences; it no longer considers being in the full sense of the term (scil. as existing reality). Thus metaphysics becomes a critical study of concepts[27]. Suarez does not make use of the classical distinction between "considered in itself" and "with regard to us" and so our human concepts are, in a sense, prior to God[28]. Suarez pointed the way for modern subjectivism and the so-called transcendental philosophies[29]. The question of the certainty of our knowledge becomes the dominant theme. The way lay open for Descartes, "a disciple of the disciples of Suarez"[30].

As Christian Wolff observed, the rise of Cartesian philosophy led to the decline of classical metaphysics[31]. While Leibniz still maintained

positions fondamentales, Paris 1952, 91-94. One may compare *Ordinatio* I, d.3, p.1, q.3 : *Opera omnia* (Vatic.) III, p.68. According to Scotus the first division of being is that in infinite and in finite being. For this entire period see A. Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik? Die Diskussion über den Gegenstand der Metaphysik im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, Leiden/Köln 1965.

[25] *Disputationes Metaphysicae* II 3, 12.

[26] *O.c.* II 4, 11.

[27] See M.-D. Philippe, *Une philosophie de l'être, est-elle encore possible? II: Significations de l'être*, Paris 1975, p.103; Jean-François Courtine, *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique*, Paris 1990, p.228ff.

[28] Cf. *Disp. Metaph.* I 1, 19: "...de primis principiis quae Deum ipsum comprehendunt".

[29] Cf. E. Gilson, *L'être et l'essence*, Paris 1948, p.152; G. Siewerth, *Das Schicksal der Metaphysik von Thomas zu Heidegger*, Einsiedeln 1959, p.119: "Suarez hat die Metaphysik endgültig in rationale Logik verwandelt"; p.139: "Das Denken wird objektiv absolut gegenständig in sich selbst".

[30] Gilson, *o.c.*, p.155. Cf. P. Mesnard, "Comment Leibniz se trouva placé dans le sillage de Suarez", in *Archivees de philosophie* XVIII, 1-32.

[31] *Ontologia*, Praefatio: ". . . postquam philosophia cartesiana invaluit, in contemptum adducta omniumque ludibrio exposita fuit". Cf. Kant in the preface to the first edition of his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*: "Es war eine Zeit, in welcher sie die Königin aller Wissenschaften genannt wurde. . . Jetzt bringt es der Modeton des Zeitalters so mit sich, ihr alle Verachtung zu beweisen".

that metaphysics studies being and whatever has to do with being[32], David Hume rejected metaphysics as sophistry and as an illusion[33]. What he had in mind was clearly essentialist metaphysics. Several eighteenth century philosophers hailed Locke as the initiator of a new way of philosophizing: the analysis of the human mind now replaced the study of being. Metaphysics came to be considered an idle logomachy, a battle of words[34].

Kant confirmed the need for metaphysics as he understood it: just as man cannot live without breathing, so too he cannot exist without metaphysics[35]. At an early stage, he raised the question as to why this science had made such slight progress: apparently in metaphysics a revolution should take place similar to that in the natural sciences[36]. He argued that the place of classical metaphysics was comparable to the role of alchemy or astrology prior to the rise of chemistry and astronomy. "Real" metaphysics cannot but be the science of the limitations of human knowledge. In this way Kant brought about a clear shift in the meaning of the term metaphysics from that of the study of being to the status of the critique of human knowledge[37]. Metaphysics, in its traditional sense, is impossible, but Kant still uses the term to refer to a new all-embracing science which includes ontology, physiology, cosmology and theology. Ontology is the critical science of concepts. It is also called transcendental philosophy because it includes the study of the conditions and first elements of our knowledge a priori[38]. Prior to Kant Baumgarten had postulated such a science of the foundations of human knowledge[39]. What is proper to Kant's is the theory that the a priori[40] molds or categories of the human intellect are the object of metaphysics.

Hegel makes Kant responsible for Germany's loss of interest in metaphysics[41], indeed even for having eradicated traditional metaphys-

[32] See his *Theodicea* and *De arte combinatoria*.

[33] At the end of his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Hume raises the question whether the treatises of theology and metaphysics produce arguments based upon experience and facts. He answers "no" and concludes: "Commit it then to the flames for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion".

[34] Cf. d'Alembert "Discours préliminaire", in Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie* I 100. Turgot and Condorcet agreed with this view. Voltaire compares metaphysical studies to a game with toy balloons: when one of them is hit, the air escapes and nothing is left.

[35] *Prolegomena zu einer jeden zukünftigen Metaphysik*, 57.

[36] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Preface to the 2nd edition.

[37] Cf. T. Ando, *Metaphysics. A Critical Survey of its Meaning*, The Hague 1963, pp. 40-70.

[38] *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik* (Akademieausgabe, Bd. XX, p. 260).

[39] *Metaphysik* (1766), p.1.

[40] A priori, that is already present in the mind before it begins to think.

[41] *Wissenschaft der Logik*, IV 13.

ics root and branch[42]. Hegel himself transformed the doctrine of being into a kind of objective logic: the concept now obtained priority over being and metaphysics was considered the dialectical self-reflection of reason[43].

Engels, on the other hand, makes a radical distinction between "metaphysics" and dialectics". Whereas, in his view, metaphysics is a theory which considers the world as the sum of independent objects which in themselves are unchangeable (change is merely repetition); dialectics is the study of reality as a dynamic developing whole. Engels is highly arbitrary in his division of the history of philosophy on the basis of this distinction. For example, he attributes the origin of this form of metaphysics to the British thinkers Francis Bacon and John Locke, for whom both things and concepts are realities to be studied separately from one another[44].

The condemnation of metaphysics by Nietzsche is almost lyric in tone: metaphysical constructions, he claims, are the result of incapacity, ignorance and fatigue; metaphysics is the science of human errors. The great mistake of classical metaphysics was that of giving being priority over becoming[45]. Bergson, on the other hand, shows appreciation for classical metaphysics and even considers it an expression of "the natural metaphysics of the human intellect"[46]. In reality, however, Bergson's philosophy proceeds into the direction of sensualism: Bergson was actually looking for that which is perceptible behind the thinkable[47].

In his inaugural address of 1929 entitled *Was ist Metaphysik?* Heidegger states that metaphysics is man's most fundamental concern with the world but that in traditional metaphysics, understood as a specialised science, a narrowing of vision has taken place: analysis and systematization came to dominate. As a result the comprehensive view of reality was lost and philosophers considered a sum of beings instead of Being itself. Ever since Plato, Heidegger argues, the question of Being has no longer been raised by metaphysicians who concerned themselves merely

[42] *O.c.*, Preface to the first edition: "Dasjenige was vor diesem Zeitraum Metaphysik hieß ist sozusagen mit Stumpf end Stiel ausgerottet worden und aus der Reihe der Wissenschaften verschwunden...Es ist dies ein Faktum, daß das Interesse, teils am Inhalt, teils an der Form der vormaligen Metaphysik, teils an beiden zugleich verloren ist".

[43] Cf. his *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, I, Vorbegriff 79-83.

[44] See his *Herr Eugen Dürings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft*, Einleitung.

[45] See, for instance, his *Götzendämmerung, Der Wille zur Macht (Aus dem Nachlaß der achziger Jahren)* and *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* I 1, 5.

[46] *Evolution créatrice*, p.352.

[47] M. Jacob, in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 1989; M.L. Couturat, *ibid.*, 1900, p. 93 (quoted after R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le sens commun, la philosophie de l'être et les formules dogmatiques*[3], Paris 1922, 62).

with expressions of Being[48]. They only found the essence of things but forgot Being itself and its truth. The trend to supplant Being by beings is the tragedy of Western thought[49].

As a result from this forgetfulness anxiety assails man about being which has lost its foundation. Through such an experience of anxiety man understands that he is a special being, namely *Dasein* . He experiences his own being as surrounded and threatened by nothingness. Thus the question arises as to why anything exists rather than nothing at all[50]. When we become concerned with this problem, we may open up ourselves to Being. Heidegger points out that Being, toward which we may transcend in metaphysics, is not God but that which lies beyond and is at the same time closest by[51]. Being is *Lichtung*, a shining self-revelation, but it also conceals itself. It is ordered to man, but remains at a certain distance from him. If one forgets the ontological difference (the distinction between Being (*das Sein*) and a being (*das Seiende*), one remains stuck at the level the latter[52].

Heidegger apparently intends to carry out a metaphysical investigation because he is seeking the last causes or, at least, the background of things. However, he clings to a strictly phenomenological approach. Being becomes "being present to man", although it sometimes withdraws itself from man[53]. The postulate of the ontological difference and Heidegger's refusal to ground Being in God are also objectionable. Being no longer appears to be a substance. For this reason one wonders whether Heidegger himself is not a victim of what Gustav Siewerth calls the tragic fate of Western thought: man determines or at least co-determines the nature of being; because man no longer has access to the real cause of being, he experiences his contingency and 'thrown-ness' (*Geworfenheit*) in existential anxiety and is tortured by the fear that everything is meaningless and absurd[54].

[48] Cf. his *Einleitung* to *Was ist Metaphysik?*[2] *in Wegmarken*, Frankfurt a.M. 1967, p. 198ff. See also G. Haeffner, *Heideggers Begriff der Metaphysik*, München 1974; F. Wiplinger, *Metaphysik. Grundfragen ihres Ursprungs und ihrer Vollendung*, edit. by Peter Kampits, Freiburg/München 1976.

[49] See his *Platon Lehre von der Wahrheit.*

[50] *Was ist Metaphysik?*, Frankfurt a. M. 1960. Leibniz raised the same question but his answer was different: every being has a sufficient reason to be. See his *Principes de la nature et de la grâce fondés en raison (Die philos. Schriften)*, Gerhardt VI 602. According to Aquinas beings shows itself as being true and as having a cause. See below chs 6 and 12.

[51] *Brief über den Humanismus*, in *Wegmarken*, p. 162.

[52] *Holzwege*, Frankfurt a. M. 1952.

[53] See the Introduction to his *Was ist Metaphysik?*

[54] Siewerth, *o.c.*, (n. 29): "Das Denken des Menschen wird Ursprung und Ort des Seins. Die "reine Vernunft" erreicht den höchst möglichen Grad denkender Vollendung, während

As many other philosophers influenced by idealism do, J.-P. Sartre and M. Merleau-Ponty state that there is an unbridgeable cleft between reality (*la chose*) and human thought. Sartre places man (*L'être-pour-soi*) opposite being-in-itself; Merleau-Ponty asserts that "if the thing (*la chose*) itself were to be attained by us, it would cease to exist as a thing the moment we thought we possessed it. What constitutes the reality of the thing is precisely that which removes it from possession by us"[55], "Things are transcendent to the extent that I do not know what they are and I confirm their existence blindly"[56]. Consequently the metaphysics of being is impossible. If Merleau-Ponty nevertheless calls man a metaphysical being, he means that as soon as man ceases to live in the obviousness of the object and experiences his own subjectivity, he reaches a deeper level of knowledge[57]. Metaphysics, then, is not a system of knowledge but the becoming aware of the meaning of one's own activities in contact with the world. This contact with the world and the appearance of things are determined by the structure of our bodily being. My body is the standpoint from which I see reality and hence my knowledge of things has something strictly individual about it[58].

Merleau-Ponty is not an idealist thinker to the extent that he states that the existence of the world is known with certainty and in this way he replaces a merely subjective knowledge of the object by one's personal expèrience. But he does reduce metaphysics to the becoming aware of our human condition[59]. For this reason his philosophy may be called a kind of idealism[60]. St. Thomas rejects the thesis which declares that reality is out of reach and teaches the knowability and accessibility of being[61]. Man's own being or reality being experienced by man are only adventitious aspects of being. They cannot be the real object of metaphysics. Even if it is true that to a certain extent man can "impose" meanings on things, Aquinas is nevertheless unwavering in his thesis that metaphysics is a non-subjective knowledge of reality which is independent of our subjective impressions or condition. That metaphysical knowledge is possible is due to the capacity of the intellect to abstract what is universal and what is common from individualized appearances.

zugleich das nicht mehr zu Denkende der Geheimnisse einer reinen übernatürlichen Mysterientheologie anheimfällt".

[55] *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 270: "Ce qui fait la réalité de la chose est donc justement ce qui la dérobe à notre possession".

[56] *O.c.*, p. 423.

[57] *Sens et non-sens*, pp. 186f.

[58] Cf. his *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 180; 357.

[59] *Phénoménologie*, p. 344; *Sens et non-sens*, p. 143.

[60] De Waelhens uses the expression "un idéalisme de la signification". See his *Une philosophie de l'ambiguité* Louvain/Paris 1962.

[61] See below chapter V on the truth of being.

The legacy of the Enlightenment also makes itself felt in the tendency to reserve the term scientific knowledge for empirical science as Auguste Comte had argued to do in the nineteenth century[62]. Moritz Schlick has the same view: there is no other field of scientific truth besides that of the sciences. The "insoluble problems of metaphysics are not problems at all"[63]. Questions concerning essential contents are a meaningless arrangement of words. Since this is not so easy to perceive, a great deal of philosophical speculation has been on the wrong track for more than twenty-five centuries[64]. According to Schlick human reason is not capable of making valid deductions. The only task left over for philosophy is that of clearing up the meaning of terms.

Rudolph Carnap shares this view: philosophy in the sense of a system of assertions formulated apart from scientific affirmations simply does not exist[65]. According to Carnap and his fellow neopositivists metaphysics may give expression to certain feelings (*Lebensgefühle*) but it is devoid of genuine value for human knowledge: metaphysicians are like people without talent who practise music[66]. A. Ayer also rejects metaphysics as an approach to reality[67] and according to H. Reichenbach the fact that we have left the metaphysical age behind us means real progress.

The Oxford Philosophers, on the other hand, adopt a less negative standpoint. In their view metaphysics even if it is not scientific, can nonetheless have some value. They see it as a possible, schematic organization of thought and as a way of looking at things which yields meaning without being either definitely true or false. Thus metaphysics becomes a language game and a game with language[68]. Popper and Strawson are even more positive. The former distinguishes between empirical and non-empirical theses; the empirical principle is applicable only to the first and proves nothing against metaphysics. Nonetheless the

[62] On this *monism* of scientific knowledge see J. Piaget, *Sagesse et illusions de la philosophie*, Paris 1965.

[63] "Die Wende der Philosophie", in *Erkenntnis* (1930-1931)7.

[64] *Philosophical Papers II (1925-1936)*, edit. by H.L. Mulder and B. van de Velde, Dordrecht 1979, 312.

[65] "Die alte und die neue Logik", in *Erkenntnis* I (1930-1931) 12-26, p.20.

[66] "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache", in *Erkenntnis II (1932)* 238;240.

[67] See his *The Foundation of Empirical Knowledge*, London 1940, 274; *Language, Truth and Logic*, 1.

[68] Cf.F. Weismann, *Linguistic Analysis and Philosophy*, pp.38ff.

task of metaphysics remains limited. In Popper's view metaphysics merely provides thought structures. Strawson envisages metaphysics as a descriptive clarification of fundamental concepts[69].

As is apparent from the above the empirical principle (i.e., a statement has only meaning if it can be verified empirically) is not considered to be absolute by all positivists. At this juncture it is worth noting that St. Thomas repeatedly points out that although all our knowledge comes to us through the senses, nevertheless our intellect sees more in the data of sense experience than the senses themselves which present these data[70]. For example, the intellect can know substances; it can distinguish between the actual and the potential as well as between substantial and accidental being; it comes to know causality and it may even leave aside material things qua material in order to study being as such and its attributes.

Another school of thought which found widespread support in the first half of the twentieth century is so-called Transcendental Thomism. It emphasizes that it is man who raises the question of being and of the meaning of things; accordingly man can determine in part this meaning. Man cannot but set out from his own world when raising the question of the being of things[71]. While in realist metaphysics the use of objective methods ensures that metaphysical knowledge grasps reality and is guided by objective evidence, when using the so-called transcendental method one returns to the subjective conditions of our knowledge[72]. The historical starting point of this influential school is the work of Joseph Maréchal S.J.[73]. Maréchal hoped to arrive at the same conclusions St. Thomas accepted, by using Kant's transcendental method. E. Koreth went beyond Maréchal by holding that the transcendental method is the only valid one[74].

[69] Cf.K. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* ; F. Strawson, *An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* ; D. Antiseri, *Perchè la metafisica è necessaria per la scienza e dannosa per la fede*, Brescia 1980, chs 4 and 5.

[70] See ch.19 on how the intellect knows causality.

[71] Cf.E.Coreth S.J., *Metaphysik*, Innsbruck 1961, 13; J. de Vries, S.J., "Der Zugang zur Metaphysik", in *Scholastik* 16 (1961) 480-496.

[72] The expression "transcendental" used in this meaning originates from Kant: "Ich nenne alle Erkenntnis transzendental, die sich nicht sowohl mit Gegenständen, sondern mit unserer Erkenntnis von Gegenständen, insofern diese apriori möglich sein soll, überhaupt beschäftigt" (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 25).

[73] *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*. This work appeared in five volumes which were published as from 1923 (first in Bruges/Paris, later Brussels/Paris and finally Louvain/Paris).

[74] See R. Henle, "Transcendental Thomism. A Critical Assessment", in V. Brezik (edit.) *Hundred Years of Thomism*, Houston 1981, 90-116. Henle calls Transcendental Thomism a contradiction in itself; it is a kind of Christian idealism.

Thomism, however, rejects this transcendental method emphatically: until the time of Kant, or at least until Descartes, it was not in use; one cannot reasonably hold that the great metaphysicians of the past followed an insufficient or mistaken method and that their aproach lacks an adequate foundation or is wrong. —Furthermore, it is clear that the positive sciences do not use this method and nonetheless arrive at true insights into the material world. A reflection on the subjective factors in our knowledge is possible and even necessary, but this reflection is not a condition intrinsically determining our knowledge. Every reflection presupposes that the obvious is true and therefore presupposes the knowability of all beings and the harmony between man's cognitive faculties and beings. In the pages that follow, the reader can convince himself that an objective metaphysical approach to reality is possible.

Finally, it should be noted that St. Thomas' metaphysics does not study the so-called objectivily given as opposed to what is subjective[75], but it considers being. This includes man insofar as he is a being. One may even say that the metaphysical knowledge of being relies necessarily on and is accompanied by the concrete experience of physical reality, sc. of the cosmos as well as our own[76]. Metaphysics finds in the particular individual things and facts of our concrete experience a deeper kernel: being as such is of a higher order than each individual being,since it is the principle and basis of all forms of being[77].

St. Thomas Aquinas' Idea of Metaphysics

This brings us to Aquinas' theory and use of metaphysics. St. Thomas comments painstakingly and profoundly on the text of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but he has nevertheless worked out an original theory of the philosophy of being which is an extension, a transposition and a partial

[75] It is a misunderstanding of far reaching consequences that the epistemology of the past centuries considered the thing, known by us, not as a thing but as an object (which is not identical with the thing). According to the realism of Aquinas, the thing itself comes to us in our knowledge and can be known as present in us, that is intentionally present (with its knowable contents), not physically.

[76] Transcendental Thomism, on the other hand, starts from man. See O. Much, *Die transzendentale Methode in der Philosophie der Gegenwart*, Innsbruck 1964, 120-145.

[77] *S.Th.* III 16, 9 ad 2: "Esse autem simpliciter est superius ad esse hominem"; *In V Metaph.*, lesson 9, n. 896: "Nam ens est superius ad unumquodque sicut animal ad hominem"; *Quaest. disp. de veritate*, 22, art.6 ad 1: "tamen non est verum quod intelligere sit nobilius quam esse". Cf. B. Lakebrink, "La interpretación existencial del concepto tomista del acto del ser", in *Veritas et sapientia. En el VII Centenario de Santo Tomás de Aquino*, Pamplona 1975, 21-40.

correction of that of Aristotle. The first point to be emphasized is that according to Aquinas metaphysics does not deal exclusively with an immaterial, suprasensible world lying behind and beyond the objects of sense perception but with being[78].

As has been recalled in the previous section St. Thomas encountered a wide range of theories regarding the subject matter of metaphysics. They had in common that they generally looked upon a particular area or level of reality as the subject of first philosophy. Only Aristotle himself in Book IV of his *Metaphysics*, Alexander of Aphrodisias in his commentary on this text and Avicenna held that being *qua* being is the subject of this highest philosophical discipline. Aquinas repeatedly writes that metaphysics has as its subject being (*ens*) as common to all things (*ens commune*)[79].

This means that it does not deal with a particular class of beings but examines simply everything that is. On this point St. Thomas corrects Aristotle who posits in the Sixth Book of the *Metaphysics*, that theology (first philosophy) considers being that is unchangeable and separate from matter. Thomas adds that it *also* considers things perceptible to the senses[80]. Metaphysics has being as its subject matter. The question arises as to how we arrive at this study of being, in other words how one enters metaphysics and organizes its study and what the precise meaning of the term being is in this context. Furthermore what does Aquinas say of the apparently contradictory views expressed by Aristotle in regard of the subject of metaphysics?

Frequently the origin of the theoretical sciences is seen as the result of a progressive abstraction: one abstracts from the individuality of things,from their sensible qualities and finally from all materiality. Reference is made to a few texts of Aquinas which seem to point to such a progressive abstraction in three stages[81]. Actually this view was almost common to neo-scholastics: J. Gredt and J. Maritain subscribe to it[82] and it is also found in the writings of such contemporary Thomists as M.-V. Leroy[83] and C. Vansteenkiste[84]. However, it contradicts numerous

[78] Cf. *In III Metaph.*, lectio 4, n. 384: "...inquantum haec scientia est considerativa entis"; *In IV Metaph.*, l.1, n. 533: "Ergo ens est subiectum huius scientiae"; *In VI Metaph.*, lectio 1, n. 1145: "...ex quo ens est subiectum huiusmodi scientiae". Cf. also A.Moreno, "The Nature of Metaphysics", in *The Thomist*, 1966, 109-135.

[79] See the previous note.

[80] *In VI Metaph.*, lectio 1, n. 1165.

[81] *S.Th.* I 85, 1 ad 2; *In III De anima*, lectio 12, n. 781ff.

[82] J. Gredt, *Elementa philosophiae aristotelico-thomisticae*, I, n. 230f.; J.Maritain, *Les degrés du savoir*, pp.106ff.

[83] "Abstractio et separatio d'après un texte controversé de S. Thomas", *Revue thomiste* 1948, 51-53.

[84] *Rassegna di letteratura tomistica* II (1970), p.80. See also J. Owens, "Metaphysical

texts in which Aquinas states that abstraction is *twofold*[85]. One must also take into consideration the well-known passage of the *Expositio in Boetii De Trinitate* in which St. Thomas speaks of *separatio* as the operation of the intellect by means of which we constitute metaphysics[86].

Several years ago L.-B. Geiger has pointed out that the autograph of this text displays three successive versions. This means that Aquinas struggled to find the best formulation of his position; the third version must be considered as practically definite[87]. In the first version St. Thomas states that the intellect must be assimilated to reality and that this occurs via the successive stages of *abstractio* and *separatio*[88]. In this text one form of *separatio* is related to the *esse* of things. Characteristic of this text is that the intellect is said to be assimilated successively to the various levels of being with the result that the hierarchy of being is decisive for the classification of theoretical sciences[89].

However, this wording is changed by St. Thomas in his definite version: the reason for the classification of the theoretical sciences lies in the intellect itself. First, an *abstractio totius* takes place, that is to say, the intellect abstracts, from the object it knows, the universal concept which leaves out individual matter and determinations. Since things appear to be individually determined and since the intellect as an immaterial faculty, is characterised by a certain degree of universality and infinitude, we should speak here of an assimilation of the object (the thing) to the intellect as regards the universal form it acquires form (not, however, with respect to its content)[90]. This level of abstraction is reached as soon as one begins to think.

Separation in Aquinas", in *Medieval Studies* V (1972), 287-306; J.-D. Robert, "La métaphysique, science distincte de toute autre discipline philosophique selon s. Thomas d'Aquin", in *Divus Thomas* (Piac.)1947, 206-223.

[85] *S. Th.* I 40, 1: "...quod duplex sit abstractio per intellectum..."; *Comp.theol.* I, c. 62; *Exp. in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.5, a.3: "Unde cum abstractio non possit esse proprie loquendo nisi coniunctorum in esse, secundum duos modos praedictos, scilicet qua pars et totum uniuntur vel forma et materia, duplex est abstractio, una qua forma abstrahitur a materia, alia qua totum abstrahitur a partibus". See also *In I Metaph.*, lectio 10, n. 158; In III Metaph., l.2, n.3 57.

[86] Question 5, article 3.

[87] "Abstraction et séparation d'après S. Thomas", in *Revue des sciences philos. et théol.* 31 (1947)3-40. For the different versions of the text see Bruno Decker's *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*, Leiden 1965, 231-234.

[88] The wording reminds of St Albert the Great's *De intellectu et intelligibili* II, 1, c.9 (edit. Lyon 1651, t.5, 259f.): "Est autem intellectus assimilativus in quo homo quantum possibile sive fas est proportionaliter surgit ad intellectum divinum".

[89] According to the tenor of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* VI 1.

[90] One must notice that the objects of physics cannot be separated from the existing

While using the result of the first manner of abstraction the intellect can go further. From the object it can also abstract the external form (of course, together with the substance in which it exists) so that all perceptible qualities are left aside[91]. Everyone appears to perform this *abstractio formalis* from early youth[92], even if some children experience a number of difficulties when they have to use it in mathematics.

It is not clear, however, how a third "degree" of abstraction would be reached. J. Maritain resorts (once more) to his favorite theory of intuition: a sudden insight would be given to some thinkers by means of which they would see being in its purity, stripped of all matter[93]. Without doubt philosophers do have intuitions: Plato made an allusion to them; Plotinus experienced some sudden insights; Descartes appears to have had a comparable experience in a hotel room in Ulm and even J.-P. Sartre mentions an intuition[94]. However, it is not evident that this type of intuition actually constitutes metaphysics. These intuitions appear to be the result of concentrated thinking and are often uncontrollable. Their truth must be proved by means of arguments. If a metaphysician were to say that due to an intuition of this kind he abstracts from all materiality, we could object that he must first show that this is possible, in other words that being need not be material. There are philosophers who hold that material beings are the only reality. According to their theory the philosophy of nature is the first science and we should renounce metaphysics as the study of reality (even though it may still have a certain logical value)[95].

This indicates the solution to our problem: in order to arrive at the study of being *qua* being, we must first prove that there are immaterial things. Only when we know with certitude that a substance without matter can exist (and is not merely a product of imagination), we can

things. With regard to the *thing* Aquinas speak of the assimilation of the intellect to what it knows. Cf. *De veritate* 1, 1: "Omnis cognitio perficitur per assimilationem cognoscentis ad rem cognitam, ita quod assimilatio dicta est causa cognitionis".

[91] See G. van Riet, "La théorie thomiste de l'abstraction", *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 50 (1952) 353-393; L. Oeing-Hanhoff, "Wesen und Formen der Abstraktion nach Thomas von Aquin", in *Philos. Jahrbuch* 71(1963); L. Vicente, "De modis abstractionis iuxta sanctum Thomam", *Divus Thomas* (Piac.) 1964, 278-299. On the influence of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Simplicius and Boethius on the terminology of abstraction, see our *Faith and Science*, Rome 1974, 96-116.

[92] Children begin to draw schematic figures of people, houses, trees etc.

[93] Cf. his comprehensive article "Réflexions sur la nature blessée et sur l'intuition de l'être", in *Revue thomiste* 68(1968) 5-40.

[94] Cf. Plato's *Seventh Letter* where there is question of a sudden appearance of the truth after much study. Sartre mentions an intuition of the contingency of human existence in *La nausée*.

[95] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1026 a27; Thomas, *In VI Metaph.*, lectio 1, n.1170.

consider substance as such, leaving out its materiality[96]. We attain this insight in the philosophy of nature when, on the basis of an analysis of the process of thinking, we conclude that the intellect and its substantial basis (the soul) are not material. Having arrived at this conclusion we find ourselves at the frontier between physics and metaphysics and are in a position to enter the latter[97].

By demonstrating the existence of immaterial being we free being from an identification with material reality and acknowledge that it is not necessarily restricted to what is material[98]. This means that we acquire a new, deeper and purer grasp of being. In material being accessible to us we may now distinguish between this or that being and being in general. Up to this point the being studied by the intellect was material being (the quiddity of material things), and this was signified by the term being (*ens*). In metaphysics, however, our concept of being changes: here being means that which is real regardless of whether it is material or not. This metaphysical concept presupposes a detailed knowledge of being, whereas being as our first concept is indistinct and precedes other concepts[99].

However, this does not mean that metaphysics no longer studies the material world. St. Thomas emphatically corrects Aristotle's thesis that first philosophy (theology) has as its subject matter immaterial things only[100]; he stresses that the subject of metaphysics, i.e., the reality studied by this science, is being, including material things, although not *qua* material[101]. In this way it becomes clear that the separation men-

[96] Cf. *Exp. in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.5, a.3 "In his autem quae secundum esse sunt divisa magis locum habet separatio quam abstractio".

[97] Cf. *In II Phys.*, lectio 4, n.175: "Et ideo terminus considerationis scientiae naturalis est circa formas quae quidem sunt aliquo modo separatae, sed tamen esse habent in materia. Et huiusmodi sunt animae rationales.." See also *In I Metaph.*, lectio 12, n. 181: "...quia in rebus non solum sunt corporea sed etiam quaedam incorporea ut patet ex libro De anima".

[98] *Exp. in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.5, a.3: "...intelligit unum alii non inesse".

[99] See *S.Th.* I 85, 1 ad 2: "Quaedam enim sunt quae possunt abstrahi etiam a materia intelligibili communi sicut ens, unum, potentia et actus et alia huiusmodi". See also *Exp.in Boetii De Trinitate*, p.5, a.1: "Quaedam vero speculabilia sunt quae non dependent a materia secundum esse, quia sine materia esse possunt, sive numquam sint in materia sicut deus et angelus, sive in quibusdam sint in materia, in quibusdam non, ut substantia, qualitas, ens, potentia, actus, unum et multa et huiusmodi".

[100] *In VI Metaph.*, l.1, n.1165: "Advertendum est autem quod licet ad considerationem primae philosophiae pertineant ea quae sunt separata secundum esse et rationem a materia et motu, non tamen solum ea sed etiam de sensibilibus inquantum sunt entia".

[101] Several texts suggest that Aquinas prefers to say that the subject of metaphysics is being, rather than that it is being *qua* being. One may compare the Proem of the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* : "considerat ut subiectum ipsum solum ens commune"; *In III Metaph.*, lectio 4, n. 384: "...unde inquantum haec est consideratio entis considerat maxime causam formalem"; *In IV Metaph.*, l.1, n. 529: "Primo supponit aliquam esse scientiam cuius

tioned above gives access to being in a new way so that one may explore its full depth, true nature and ultimate causes.

What is completely new in the manner in which Aquinas grounds metaphysics scientifically is that on the one hand he does consider the insight into the existence of immaterial things a condition for entrance into and the exercise of metaphysics, while on the other hand he holds resolutely that the subject of metaphysics is not just immaterial being but also material things, i.e. the whole of (created) reality. Therefore, the subjects of the three branches of the theoretical sciences are not constituted by the different levels of being into which reality is devided according to the Platonists[102].

In this connection the Proem of Aquinas' *Commentary on the Metaphysics* deserves to be mentioned for it brings together in a higher synthesis the divergent views on the highest science which one finds in Aristotle's treatise. In doing so it does not set out from a division of reality but from the operation of the intellect. The first and highest sciences must correspond most to the intellect and deal with that which is most intelligible. This is 1) that which provides certainty (i.e. knowledge of the first causes); 2) things which are furthest removed from the perceptible, i.e. are most universal, such as being, unity and so on; 3) that which is furthest removed from matter, like God and spiritual beings. However, upon closer examination it appears that one and the same science examines 1), 2) and 3): the immaterial things are the causes of being and one and the same science studies the causes of a genus as well as this genus itself. However, the proper subject of metaphysics is being as common to all things (*ens commune*), whereas the knowledge of the causes of being is its aim.

The importance of the term subject (*subjectum*) should be emphasized: by means of it St. Thomas indicates that metaphysics considers reality as we encounter it and as it is in itself. Thus he writes at the start of his treatise on the division of the theoretical sciences that the aim of these disciplines is truth, that is the knowledge of reality and for this reason, the things not made by man are their subjects[103]. Whenever being is examined in regard to a particular aspect, toward which a cognitive

subiectum sit ens"; *In VI Metaph.*, l.1, n. 1145: "...ex quo ens est subiectum". This stress on being as the subject of metaphysics is the more striking because Aristotle speaks of "being as being" and does not say that just being is the subject.

[102] One might object to the contrary that certain texts (*In XI Metaph.*, l.7, n. 2267 and n. 2248) mention an order of subjects which determines the order of the sciences. However, Aquinas is speaking here (as the text itself says) of *particular sciences* which concern a determinate genus of beings, and not of metaphysics.

[103] *Expos. in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.5, a.1.

faculty (such as the senses) is directed or on which the intellect concentrates, we speak of the object of a faculty[104]. The object, scil. the manner of approach and the question which part or aspect of a thing is perceived, depend on the particular faculty[105]. From the use of the term *subiectum* it also follows that in metaphysics (created) being is considered under no limiting aspect whatsoever.

Not only does Aquinas correct Aristotle's idea of metaphysics, he is even convinced that Plato and Aristotle did not strictly speaking engage in this science[106]. The argument advanced by St. Thomas in support of this conclusion which at first sight seems somewhat strange, is the fact that neither of the two great philosophers succeeded in reaching a real analysis of created being, as they were unaware of the composition of all things of the act of being (*esse*) and essence; they did not view the being of things as caused by Self-Subsistent Being Itself.

A further conclusion from the above is that metaphysics and philosophical theology are one and the same science. When deepening our knowledge of common being we proceed to consider its causes with the result that metaphysics becomes the study of the First Being. As regards this second part of metaphysics, Aquinas states emphatically that although we can demostrate God's existence with certainty, our natural intelligence cannot really come to know God's essence[107]. He also expresses this as follows: the subject of metaphysics is common being, but God does not come under common being.

[104] Cf. *Q.d.de anima*, a.13: "Oportet attendere distinctionem obiectorum secundum quod obiecta sunt differentiae actionum animae et non secundum aliud"; *S. Th.* I 1, 7: "Sic enim se habet subiectum ad scientiam sicut obiectum ad potentiam vel habitum".-In its technical meaning the term *obiectum* came into use about 1240 when "the objects" of the external senses became the subject of careful study. See L. Dewan, "*Obiectum*. Notes on the invention of a word", in *AHLDMA* 489 (1981) 37-96.

[105] Cf. J.-M. Henri-Rousseau, "L'être et l'agir", *Revue Thomiste* 53 (1953) 488ff., in particular pp. 515-522.

[106] In *S. Th.* I 44, 2 he writes of Plato and Aristotle that both considered being under a particular aspect, either inasmuch as it is this being, or as such a being; other philosophers, however, "went further and attained the study of being *qua* being and the cause of things". The alleged contradiction with *Q.d. de potentia*,q.3,a.5 is only apparent. This text must not be understood as saying that Plato and Aristotle came to consider being itself; rather those who followed them and used their principles did. Likewise *In VIII Phys.*, lectio 2, n. 975, where Plato and Aristotle are said to have discovered the "principium totius esse", does not imply that both philosophers developed the philosophy of being. They did discover the existence of immutable and necessary being but did not fully perceive the dependence of all things on God. —Finally, the seemingly more positive statements about Plato and Aristotle in certain works of Aquinas may also be explained as an attempt to counteract the "paganizing interpretation" of Aristotle by Averroes which could provoke a reaction of total rejection, —as actually happened in 1277.

[107] See our *St Thomas Aquinas' Philosophical Theology*, ch.4.

The term "common" (*commune*) refers to something (a *quid*) attributable to more than one thing which requires no further addition (determination) and yet does not exclude such further determination. Being is of this kind: it can exist as act and potency, as substance and accident. But when we speak of "common being" we do not go so far as to denote a particular realization of being or this or that being, but we consider only "that which is", understanding thereby that we abstract from what is proper to matter. For this reason the concept *ens commune* is not the same as the first concept of being (which a child acquires as soon as its intellect begins to function), viz. the *ens primum cognitum*[108].

The terms *commune* and *universale* do not have the same meaning. A universal concept expresses an essence which is attributable univocally to all things belonging to the same genus or species. The term *commune* in "common being", on the other hand, does not exclude that being and its content vary according to whether one is dealing with act or potency, substance or accident; "common being" is an analogous concept.

It is tempting to suppose that this analogy also extends to God and that in making common being the subject of metaphysics Aquinas also includes God under this term. For he writes that being is predicated analogously of God and of creatures[109]. Followers of Suarez defend this opinion[110]. St. Thomas, however, most emphatically excludes it in order to ensure God's transcendence[111].

The statement that being (*ens*) is the subject matter of metaphysics means that metaphysics considers all reality, independent of man and excludes any restricting point of view. The expression "common being" signifies that this investigation deals with the nature of being common to all (created) things.

[108] Cf. *In I Sent.*, d.8,q.4,a.1 ad 1; d.13, q.1, a.3; *De ente et essentia*, c.5, n.30; *S.C.G.* I, c.26.

[109] *In III Sent.*, d.19, q.5, a.2, ad 1.

[110] Cf. A.M. Heilmer, "Die Bedeutung der Intentionalität im Bereich des Seins nach Thomas von Aquin", *Forschungen zur neueren Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte*, vol.14, Würzburg 1962, pp.32-39; J. de Vries, "Das *esse commune* bei Thomas von Aquin", in *Scholastik* 39 (1964), pp.163-177. Cf. Suarez, *Disp.metaph.*, d.1., sectio I, 26: "...ostensum est enim obiectum adaequatum huius scientiae debere comprehendere Deum".

[111] *Expos. in librum Dionysii De divinis nominibus*, c.5, lectio 2, n. 660: "Omnia existentia continentur sub esse ipso communi, non autem Deus, sed magis esse commune continetur sub eius virtute quia virtus divina plus extenditur quam ipsum esse creatum"; *De potentia*, q.7, a.2 ad 4: "...esse divinum non est esse commune sed est esse distinctum a quolibet alio esse. Unde per ipsum esse suum Deus differt a quolibet alio ente". See also *S.C.G.* I,c.26 and the Proem of the *Commentary on the Metaphysics* . —One should notice that Avicenna rejected the thesis that God is the subject of metaphysics, for no science demonstrates the existence of its subject matter (which is given), whereas the existence of God is shown in metaphysics. Nevertheless Avicenna's concept of being is such that God seems to come under it. See A. Zimmermann, *o.c.*, (n. 23), p. 114.

A next question is whether the *act* of being (*esse*) is the specific subject matter of metaphysics[112]. Some Thomists refer to Aquinas' doctrine of the *separatio* which gives access to metaphysics: as a judgement this separation refers to being (*esse*) and therefore metaphysics must aim at the knowledge of the act of being[113]. Thus De Raeymaeker writes that St. Thomas elevated metaphysics above the quidditative order to focus it on being (*esse*)[114]. It is also the opinion of G.B. Phelan[115] and J. Owens[116] that the act of being must be the proper subject of metaphysics. This view brings them into conflict with an older, more essentialist position which holds that the act of being cannot be this subject matter, since the being of things is often contingent and is always individualized existence, whereas a science investigates the universal and the necessary[117]. Other authors claim that the subject of metaphysics is not merely essence but also being[118].

This discussion, however, is quite superfluous if one considers that according to St. Thomas material things as well as immaterial beings constitute the subject-matter of metaphysics[119].When he says that *ens* (that which is) is this subject and that the act of being is the most formal element in it[120], he means that metaphysics considers reality and the being of things, but in a universal way and without excluding the essence: "...the metaphysician examines the essences of things as these

[112] St Albert the Great considered created *esse* as flowing forth from God the subject of first philosophy: "...esse enim quod haec scientia considerat...accipitur...prout est prima effluxio Dei et primum creatum" (*In I Metaph.*, tr.1, c.2: Geyer 2, 3-4).

[113] *Expos. in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.5, a.3: "Secunda vero operatio respicit ipsum esse rei..."

[114] "La profonde originalité de la métaphysique de saint Thomas d'Aquin", in *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter. Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, II. 14-29, p.28.

[115] "A Note on the Formal Object of Metaphysics" in (edit.) A.C. Pegis, *Essays in Modern Scholasticism*, Westminster MD 1944. 47-51: "When, therefore, the question is asked, 'what is the formal object of metaphysics?', there can be but one answer, namely that which formally constitutes its object, being (*id* quod est) as being (id quod *est*), and this is the act of being"(p.50). "Metaphysics is definitely existential" (*ibid.*).

[116] "A Note on the Approach to Thomistic Metaphysics", in *The New Scholasticism* 28(1954) 454-476.

[117] Cf. P. Descoqs, *Eléments d'ontologie*, Paris 1925, I, p.,100 where the author quotes Kleutgen: "We abstract from existence. Only in this way can finite and created things, in which existence is not of their essence, become the object of a science". See also J. Gredt, *Elementa philosophiae aristotelico-thomisticae* [13], II, p.11: "Ens quod est obiectum metaphysicae est ens ut nomen. Hoc enim latius patet, abstrahit ab actu existendi et dividitur in ens actu existens et ens mere possibile".

[118] J. Maritain, *Sept leçons sur l'être*, Paris 1933, p.26; Vincent E. Smith, "On the Being of Metaphysics", in *The New Scholasticism* 20 (1946), pp. 72-81 (the object of metaphysics is existential essence).

[119] The latter, however, cannot be called the subject matter in the strict sense of the term because their existence is not entirely certain to natural reason.

[120] See below the chapter on being.

exist in reality"[121]. This does not mean that the latter studies separate genera of substances. This has already been excluded since in metaphysics one abstracts from matter (the principle of multiplication). Created being is considered in its essential nature, scil. as being which results from becoming or production; as being which is composed of essence and the act of being and which is divided into substance and accidents.

The form which metaphysical knowledge accepts in the human intellect is general in nature. This holds true both for the act of being and the essence[122]. Gredt and others assert incorrectly that metaphysics deals with "being as a noun"[123]. Because the act of being is the deepest reality and greatest perfection in things, metaphysics refers even more to it than to essence, that is, the insight to be gained into the (created) act of being is the most valuable acquisition in the study of common being. To this one may add that metaphysical speculation finds its fulfilment and perfection in the knowledge of God as Self-Subsistent Being Itself.

Does metaphysics, due to the *separatio*, refer exclusively to the act of being of things? St. Thomas, indeed, states explicitly that this separation pertains to the second operation (or judgment) of the intellect which concerns the act of being[124]. Some Thomists even affirm that according to Aquinas metaphysics depends on the insight that the act of being is not a subject, or that being itself does not exist[125]: the composition (of the subject and predicate) expressed in all our statements would for this reason have to be denied of all assertions to be made in metaphysics. But these authors make no distinction between our statements about God and those about (created) things. As regards the former we may not rely, it is true, on the structure of composition proper to our statements to determine God's nature[126], but in regard to statements about (created) beings this is not the case.

[121] *Expos.in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.6, a.3: "naturalis et philosophus primus considerant essentias secundum quod habent esse in rebus".

[122] One may compare the text of the idea of (the act of) being in the chapter devoted to it.

[123] Aquinas solves the difficulty (on which Gredt appears to have stumbled) in his *Expos. in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.5,a.2 ad 4 and ad 5: "Rationes autem universales rerum omnes sunt immobiles et ideo quantum ad hoc omnis scientia de necessariis est. Sed rerum quarum sunt illae rationes, quaedam sunt necessariae et immobiles, quaedam contingentes et mobiles et quantum ad hoc de rebus contingentibus et mobilibus dicuntur esse scientiae". One may add that the unbiversal concept does not separate us from the reality of what is known.Cf. J.-H. Nicolas, "L'intuition de l'être et le premier principe", in *Revue thomiste* 47(1947) 113-134.

[124] *Exp. in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.5, a.3: "Secunda vero operatio respicit ipsum esse rei".

[125] F.D. Wilhelmsen, "The Concept of Existence and the Structure of the Judgement: a Thomistic Paradox", *The Thomist* 41(1977) 317-349, p. 339: "the insight that the *esse* is not-being-a-subject".

[126] Cf. *S. Th.* I,3, 4 ad 2; 13,12.

If we consider the passus of Aquinas' *Expositio in Boetii De Trinitate* on separation in its context, its purport becomes clear: in order to study common being, one must set it free from its materiality. Simple abstraction is not adequate because one cannot abstract forms which in reality are dependent on and remain identical with that from which they are abstracted[127]. On the other hand a negative judgment concerning reality declares things separate which are actually separate. In connenction with the constitution of metaphysics "separation" means nothing other than the insight that not every being is material; this insight enables us to form a new concept of being. The function of "separation" with regard to metaphysics is not the same as that of abstraction with regard to the philosophy of nature. "Separation" is an external condition, whereas abstraction is intrinsic to and accompanies all scientific statements, both in the philosophy of nature and in metaphysics[128].

From the above it is clear that, contrary to what a widespread opinion holds, metaphysics is not a kind of knowledge set apart from reality, having abstractions as its object. According to this mistaken view it would deal with an area of being that is concealed and withdrawn from the empirical reality. Over and against this opinion Aquinas maintains that metaphysics is the study of all beings, thus in the first place of immediately accessible, empirical reality. Some may object that this reality is dried up due to separation and abstraction, with the result that we obtain a world of general concepts in which becoming and historicity have no further place[129].

St. Thomas' reply to this objection is clear: the doctrine of being cannot do otherwise than keep to reality and conform to it. It does exclude becoming from its consideration, although it studies it at a deeper level, namely that of potential being. Being considered in its

[127] The abstraction of the universal (human nature) from the individual is possible because human nature is not identitical with this particular individual. The abstraction of a quantitative form from a concrete subject with its sensible qualities is possible inasmuch as extension is not identical with the latter nor dependent on them.

[128] *S. Th.* I 85,1 ad 2 speaks of 'three' manners of abstraction. It does not contradict the above interpretation. When Aquinas writes that "there are certain things which can be abstracted even from matter" the reason why these things can be abstracted in this way is not indicated. It is no other than the proven conclusion that not every being is material.

[129] According to a persistent criticism manuals of metaphysics "fix" and "freeze" philosophy and deprive it from life; Thomism leaves no room for history. See G.F. McLean. "Metaphysics and Historicity. A Statement of the Problem", in *Akten des XIV. intern. Kongresses f. Philosophie*, Vienna 1968, III, 554-562, p.555. J. de Vries even writes that "also a Thomism freed from misunderstandings no longer is sufficient today. What is wrong is the on its turn historically conditioned lack of the sense of history and historicity. It was thought that like other sciences philosophy must mainly deal with the universal and the necessary" (*"Christliche Philosophie", in Stimmen der Zeit* (1977) 274).

general form (and not as man's being or as physical being) is precisely that which is the living heart and spring of concrete reality, as will be pointed out below in the chapter on the act of being.

Metaphysics is based on the insight that there are immaterial beings and for this reason it views material things not as material but as beings which are composite and do not exist through themselves. It is a mistake to make historicity the chief characteristic of being. Besides, one may also observe against this criticism that by the very fact that man can raise the problem of historicity and reflect on it, he shows that in the intimacy of the intellectual dimension of his being he himself stands above the historicity consequent on his embodiment[130].

In a sense the metaphysics of Aquinas constitutes a break with tradition as he gave to it a new basis and novel contents. He did indeed make use of all the insights of Aristotle, the Greek commentators, Avicenna and St. Albert the Great that were correct and appropriate. Out of modesty and respect for his illustrious predecessors he laid down the pioneering novelty of his doctrine as unostentatiously as possible. His metaphysics aims at making reality in its deepest nature and in its ultimate source understandable to us. Unfortunately, many are those who give preference to systems of their own making in which a high degree of subjectivity prevails[131] But it would seem that precisely these rather arbitrary, although often ingenious systems have aroused the reactions of Feuerbach, Marx, Engels, Nietzsche and the Neopositivists.

Is Metaphysics to be Preceded by the Critique of Our Knowledge?

Due to the attacks levelled by Hume and Kant against classical metaphysics we have to face the question of whether our experience of reality must not be *proven* to be correct before we can perform metaphysical considerations? St. Thomas' reply to this question is as simple as it is short: 1) A fundamental doubt as to the capacity of the intellect to achieve true knowledge of the world must be excluded emphatically, for such doubt would undermine any critical investigation itself for it requires the use of the intellect[132]. 2) The existence of beings is absolutely certain[133]. 3) Critical reflection is by definition a study of our knowledge and follows upon it.—As the science of being and of the principles of being metaphysics is the first philosophical discipline; it does not depend on the criticism of our knowledge. Being reveals itself to us and, because of the evidence which accompanies careful reductions and deductions, certainty is possible.

[130] Cf. our "Les théories de l'historicité de la pensée et S. Thomas d'Aquin", in *San Tommaso d'Aquino, Doctor humanitatis. Atti del IX Congresso Tomistico Internazionale, I*, Città del Vaticano 1991, 237-248.

[131] Cf.E.A. Malek, "Entretien avec Claude Lefort", *Le monde*, 10 mai 1978.

[132] Cf. *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 6, n. 607ff.; *S.C.G.* III, c. 107.

Metaphysics and the Christian Faith

In the previous section an account was given of the way in which, according to Aquinas one enters metaphysics. To make this point clear we have been using analyses and considerations based on natural reason. It is a fact that Aquinas worked out his metaphysics in a Christian climate. For this reason Gilson holds that his doctrine of being, precisely in regard to its central ideas such as the concept of being and the real distinction between the act of being and the essence, is dependent on Revelation[134]. But we are convinced that this interpretation is wrong. To explain his fundamental insights and theses Aquinas always adopts arguments based on reason with the result that the intrinsic independence of metaphysics is guaranteed. This does not mean that Revelation may not serve as a beacon or aid to philosophy: there is a relationship between both and one may speak of a metaphysics that developed against the background of the Christian Faith.

It is precisely this relationship that is sharply attacked by Heidegger: anyone accepting a revelation from God is incapable, he writes, of raising the most profound question in philosophy, since this questioning would imply abandoning his faith[135]. For St. Thomas, however, this is not at all the case. First it is not possible to doubt everything: from the moment one thinks about something, one is aware of one's own existence[136] and knows the general laws of being (the first principles). Furthermore, being manifests its knowability and its meaning and hence there simply is no basic doubt as to the meaning of things. We also raise the question of the cause of the existence of things, since beings are not self-explanatory. The metaphysician can show that beings are caused by Self-subsistent Being Itself. Therefore, it is not clear what Heidegger

[133] *Q.d.de veritate*, q.10,a.12 ad 3: "...unde sicut ens esse in communi est per se notum"; *ibid.* ad 10: "ens commune incognitum esse non potest".

[134] See his *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, Garden City NY. 1960 and below chapter XII.

[135] *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Tübingen 1958, p.5.

[136] *Q.d.de veritate*, q.10,a.12 ad 3: "In hoc enim quod cogitat aliquid, percipit se esse".

means unless he wants to say that any explanation is uncertain and that philosophy must remain at the level of questions without answers. If so, he subscribes to an apriori that goes against the grain of the human mind which wants certitude. Moreover, his own questions lose their meaning if there is no answer. Despite the certitude he possesses in his faith, a Christian philosopher may use the procedure of methodical doubt on certain points (which are not immediately evident), as Aquinas does in regard to God's existence and the reality of creation.

The Place of Metaphysics among the Philosophical Disciplines

Thomas is convinced that a certain preparation is necessary for the study of metaphysics. He emphasized the need for a prior grounding in logic and the philosophy of nature. A high degree of mental maturity is also required[137]. Young persons of high school age and the first years in college cannot learn it very well. A student of metaphysics must have a good knowledge of sensible reality; the study of movement in the philosophy of nature is presupposed. But contrary to Plato, Aquinas does not seem to have considered the knowledge of mathematics an indispensable condition for the study of first philosophy[138].

The Division of Metaphysics and the Order of Themes

Metaphysics considers both (created) beings and their causes; in this way it proceeds towards the knowledge of God. What we call natural or philosophical theology is not a separate philosophical discipline, but is part of metaphysics of which it constitutes the climax. Only the dissolution of classical metaphysics led Wolff and others to treat natural theology as a particular branch of philosophy[139].

In regard to the order of themes to be treated the difficulty arises that St. Thomas himself did not write a separate treatise of metaphysics; his views have to be extracted from his theological works and his commentaries on Aristotle's writings. Aquinas does, however, make some remarks on the ordering of the Books of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: the first

[137] *In VI Ethic.*, l..7, n.1209 and *In VII Phys.*, lectio 6.

[138] See G.P. Klubertanz, "St Thomas on Learning Metaphysics" in *Gregorianum* 35(1954) 3-17.

[139] See J. Owens, "Natural Theology and Metaphysics", in *The Modern Schoolman* 28(1951) 126-137: "The above historical survey shows clearly enough that the special science of natural theology or theodicy as distinct from general metaphysics, arose from the decomposition of traditional primary philosophy".

three are preparatory studies which deal with philosophy in general and the theories of earlier philosophers in particular (Bk I), the relationship of man to truth (Bk II) and propose a survey of a number of basic issues (Bk III)[140]. The Fourth Book lays down the subject of first philosophy, the Fifth defines the most frequently used terms, and the Sixth gives an account of the extent to which metaphysics examines being[141]. The Seventh Book starts with the investigation of being and substance, the Eighth deals with substance perceptible through the senses, the Ninth with being inasmuch as it is divided into act and potency[142]. The Tenth Book deals with unity as a property of being, the Eleventh gives a survey of what has been considered previously, while the Twelfth furnishes an account of the doctrine of substance and treats of separated substance[143].

St. Thomas ends his commentary at this point, probably because he felt that the theories of the Platonists treated in Books XIII and XIV were already sufficiently dealt with in Book I and found it opportune to conclude his commentary with Book XII, ch.10 on God as the final cause of the universe.—This implies a degree of criticism of the order of the books of the *Metaphysics*[144]. In the Proem to his *Commentary* Aquinas makes some suggestions about the order of subjects to be considered: "being and those things which are consequent on being such as one and many, potency and act". Moreover he adds that we first study common being and next its properties and causes.

The following division seems to correspond to Aquinas' view:

I. The study of being and its properties (unity, truth, goodness...) as well as of the first principles of being which form the basis of all certitude.

II. The consideration of being in act and being in potency, including the real distinction between the act of being and essence, a further investigation into these components and the doctrine of participation.

III. The division of being into substance and accidents, i.e. being *per se* and being in something else.

IV. Thus far the formal cause of being was studied[145]. But we must also consider the efficient and final causes of being and arrive at the insight that a First Being exists which is Pure Act and First Efficient

[140] Cf. *In I Metaph.*, l.1, n.1; l.4, n. 60; *In II Metaph.*, l.1, n. 273; *In III Metaph.*, l.1, n. 338.

[141] *In VII Metaph.*, l.1, n. 1245; *In V Metaph.*, l.1, n. 789; *In VI Metaph.*, l.1, n. 1144.

[142] *In VII Metaph.*, l.1, n.1245; *In VIII Metaph.*, l.1, n. 1681; *In IX Metaph.*, l.1, n. 2416.

[143] *In X Metaph.*, l.1, n. 1920; *In XI Metaph.*, l.1, n. 2146; *In XII Metaph.*, l.1, n. 2416.

[144] For more criticism see *In III Metaph.*, l.4, n. 384.

[145] *In III Metaph.*, l.4, n. 384: "Unde inquantum haec scientia est considerativa entis, considerat maxime causam formalem".

Cause, and is necessary through itself, is "being in the highest degree" and is the Mind ordering the universe.

V. This demonstration is followed by a consideration of how God is or, rather, how he is not: only a negative knowledge of God's essence is possible.

Metaphysics, therefore, is the study of being and its causes; it considers the four causes and mainly the formal and final causes[146]. The formal cause of being is precisely that what being and its properties are. The final cause is considered inasmuch as metaphysics studies the ordering of beings to one another and to the First Cause.

The Method or Methods to be Followed

As regards the method to be adopted, we note that although metaphysics is not a historical discipline, the study of the various theories proposed by other philosophers in the course of history is nonetheless necessary. Our own knowledge is limited and the study of the thought of others helps us to get to know the various aspects of the questions to be treated[147] and to penetrate more deeply into the problems involved[148]. If other thinkers hold the same as what we have thought out for ourselves, our views are confirmed[149]. Even in cases of conflicting opinions we are able sometimes to determine the most likely solution[150].

The metaphysician also uses what Aristotle and St. Thomas call the logical method, a manner of performing certain analyses which shows affinity with the procedure of the philosophy of language: at the start of a treatise the terms to be used must be carefully defined and their different meanings must be distinguished[151]. For example, the various senses or uses of such terms as being (*ens*), the act of being (*esse*), cause, effect, neccesary, accidental, etc. are enumerated. The logical method is used also in some arguments as, for example, in the proof of the real distinction between the act of being and essence in the *De ente et essentia*.

[146] *In XI Metaph.*, l.6, n. 2227; *In XII Metaph.*, l.12, n. 2650.

[147] *In I Metaph.*, l.4, n. 72; *In II Metaph.*, l.1, n. 276: "Licet id quod unus homo potest...apponere ad cognitionem veritatis suo studio et ingenio sit aliquid parvum per comparationem ad totum, tamen illud quod aggregatur ex omnibus...exquisitis et collectis fit aliquid magnum".

[148] *L.c.*, n. 287.

[149] *In XI Metaph.*, l.6, n. 2227; *In XII Metaph.*, l.12, n. 2650.

[150] *In II De caelo*, l.1, n.281; see also our "Saint Thomas et la diversité des opinions philosophiques", in *Doctor communis* 1975, 171-189.

[151] Cf. *In VII Metaph.*, l.3, n. 1308: "Et ideo modus logicus huic scientiae proprius est et ab eo convenienter incipit".

Furthermore, metaphysicians may occasionally resort also to what is now called the phenomenological method. By this we mean that the descriptive analysis of what we experience inwardly may be of use in the explanation of the origin of the first concepts and principles and enable us to observe how the concept of being (*esse*) arises from that of *ens*[152].

Foremost among the methods used in metaphysics is resolution or reduction, the process of thought which proceeds from the study of effects to the knowledge of their causes and from the less universal to the more universal. St. Thomas expatiates on it in his *Expositio in Boetii De Trinitate*[153]. According to Boethius theology proceeds *intellectualiter*(by way of insights and contemplation, without recourse to sensible representations). Interpreting this saying of Boethius Aquinas first recalls the distinction between the two operations of the intellect, on the one hand insight and understanding (*intellectus*), on the other reasoning and deduction. In the second place he distinguishes between a dual road to truth, 1) the *modus resolutionis*, an analytical activity by which the mind proceeds from what is composed to what is simple, from the whole to its parts and from the less universal to what is more universal[154] 2) the *modus compositionis*, a synthetical process which proceeds from the simple to what is composed, from the causes to their effects and which sees multiplicity in a unity[155].

We consider first the *modus resolutionis*. Insight (*intellectus*) is the starting point of all intellectual activity, but this insight is imperfect, namely the knowledge of certain basic facts and principles. The most perfect understanding we can reach lies at the end of the *modus resolutionis* and is twofold: studying the extrinsical causes we reach the First Being, God; proceeding, at the level of intrinsic principles, towards the more universal we attain the most universal concepts which reason discerns in the concrete whole. If one would object that this knowledge of the most universal concepts is imperfect rather than the climax of man's intellectual efforts (as the first concept of being is), we answer that there exists a twofold knowledge of the universal: a first knowledge at the beginning is extremely imperfect because one knows only the universal; but the second way of knowing the universal expresses that which is common

[152] Cf. below the analyses in the chapters on being (*esse*), substance and causality.

[153] Question 6, article 1.

[154] The universal is simpler than the particular.

[155] *In II Metaph.*, l.1, n.278. Cf. L.-M. Régis, "Analyse et synthèse dans l'oeuvre de saint Thomas", in *Studia Mediaevalia in honorem R.J.Martin*, Bruges 1940, 303-330; L. Oeing-Hanhoff, "Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter", in *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter. II. intern.Kongreß für mittelalterliche Philosophie*, Berlin 1963, 71-91.

to the different classes and modes of being one already knows. This knowledge concerns common being and the transcendentals, whereas the first type of knowledge is reached at the beginning of our intellectual life[156].

We must return now to the *modus compositionis*. It is called the deductive method inasmuch as it proceeds from causes to their effects. Some difficulties have been raised against its use in metaphysics. A. Krapiec argues that formalized, strict deduction is not possible, for three reasons: 1) Metaphysical thought cannot be separated from intuitive contact with reality; 2) Stringent deduction requires that one remains within the same genera and species, whereas concepts used in metaphysics are analogous; 3) St. Thomas' metaphysics is not a deductive system but a collection of insights which are reached successively but which are not fully separable from one another[157].

Some marginal notes, however, must be made with regard to these arguments: as to 1) it is absolutely correct that the metaphysician must remain in contact with being by means of immediate experience because his insights and statements deal with reality. Thus there is in fact an experience of one's own being and of the world through the senses[158], but this does not exclude certain deductions. For example, the principle that "act can only be limited by a potency really distinct from it" is a principle which we reach by means of a deduction; it applies to the acts we experience as well as to all acts. With regard to 2) we notice that stringent deduction exists not only at the level of genera and species but also on that of analogous transcendental concepts. The following example will help to make clear what is meant: "everything perfect is desired; all beings are perfect; hence they are desired".This principle holds true in the different categories of being. If one objects that this example is not a strict deduction but a clarifying interpretation, the answer is that this also applies to the deductive syllogism used within a genus or species of beings[159]. As to 3) we observe that it is absolutely correct to hold that the

[156] *S. Th.* I 55, 3 ad 2.

[157] "An Analysis of Reasoning. The Problem of Proof in Philosophy", in Kaminski, Kurdzialek, Zdybicka, *Saint Thomas Aquinas. 700th Anniversary of his Death. Modern Interpretations of his Philosophy*, Lublin 1980, 71-125, pp. 123ff.

[158] R J. Henle, *Method in Metaphysics. The Aquinas Lectures 1950*, Milwaukee 1951, p. 55: "Metaphysics must be derived from experience through a constantly purifying reflection...It cannot start from concepts".

[159] Aquinas himself writes that such deductions are used in metaphysics: "Intellectualiter procedere non attribuitur scientiae divinae quasi ipsa non ratiocinetur procedendo de principiis ad conclusiones, sed quia ratiocinatio est intellectuali considerationi propinquissima et conclusiones eius principiis" (*Expos. in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.6, a.1, ql.3, ad 1).

authentic metaphysics of being is not a system consisting in a continuous series of deductions, in the manner in which Descartes, Spinoza and perhaps also Hegel unfolded their thought (*more geometrico*). Metaphysics considers being in the various forms in which it presents itself: in its properties, as being in act and being in potency, as substance or as accidental being, as a cause or as an effect. The existence of these primary forms of being is not proven deductively, but deductions are used within individual sections of this study.

The Practice and Significance of Metaphysics

Metaphysics is the study of the ultimate causes of reality. For modern man it is not so easy to engage in a discipline which demands the greatest degree of authentic experience, the capacity for abstract thinking, analysis and deduction[160] and which is also devoid of immediate practical usefulness[161]. The supreme value of metaphysics lies precisely in the fact that it provides us with the ultimate and most profound truth about being. It gives us the nourishment we need most[162]. It can, indeed, bring us closer to our real home[163] and prepare us for a different and higher type of knowledge of the First Being[164]

St. Thomas is convinced that in metaphysics we can only achieve a limited insight, but that this slight insight is of far more value than

[160] Cf.J. Maritain, *Les degrés du savoir*, p. 6: "Il est trop vrai que la métaphysique éternelle ne cadre plus avec l'intelligence moderne, ou plus exactement, que celle-ci ne cadre plus avec celle-là. Trois siècles d'empirico-mathématisme l'ont pliée à ne plus s'intéresser qu'à l'invention d'engins à capter les phénomènes, —réseaux conceptuels qui procurent à l'esprit une certaine domination pratique et une intellection décevante de la nature, parce que la pensée s'y résout, non pas dans l'être, mais dans le sensible lui-même". One may also compare G. Marcel, *Les hommes contre l'humain*, p. 70: "L'inversion de la technique ne peut pas ne pas entraîner pour l'homme l'oblitération, l'effacement progressif de ce monde du mystère, qui est à la fois celui de la présence et de l' espérance".

[161] See *In I Metaph.*, l.3, n. 65. Descartes argues to the contrary that because of their uselessness the theoretical sciences must be replaced by disciplines which have some practical use.

[162] *S.C.G.* I 2: "Oportet veritatem esse ultimum finem totius universi". Cf. J. Maritain, *o.c.*, p. 9: "Ce dont nous avons besoin ce n'est pas de vérités qui nous servent, c'est d'une vérité que nous servons". Heidegger speaks of the "homelessness" of modern man (*Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit. Mit einem Brief über den Humanismus*, p. 87.

[163] *S.C.G.* I 2: "Inquantum homo sapientiae studium dat, intantum verae beatitudinis iam aliquam partem habet". Cf. also *S. Th.* II-II 187, 1, where Aquinas argues that a life devoted to contemplation is more valuable than one in which one loses oneself in practical activities.

[164] J. Maritain, *o.c.*,p. 562: "La métaphysique engendre naturellement dans l'âme une velléité qu'elle-même n'a pas le pouvoir de combler, un désir confus et indéterminé d'une connaissance supérieure qui de fait n'est réalisée authentiquement que dans l'expérience mystique".

anything known in the other sciences[165]. Metaphysics gives us the most profound knowledge attainable by man about the nature of everything existing; it enables us also to know the ultimate end and goal of all beings and their activities[166]. The other philosophical disciplines each have a subject that is determined and limited, and hence only yield knowledge in a limited field. For example, the philosophy of nature deals with material being which is subject to change[167].

If it is true that metaphysics procures the deepest and loftiest knowledge of being, it cannot be subservient to other sciences but gives them the basis and the background on which and against which they must needs develop their investigations. All men strive after perfection and happiness. But truth is the perfection of our cognitive life[168]. If, then, metaphysics procures us this truth, the loss of metaphysics is a threat to our human nature. As every man strives after knowledge and truth, he is by nature directed toward metaphysics, i.e., man is an *animal metaphysicum* [169].

[165] *In I Metaph.*, l.3, n. 60: "Nec enim ad nutum subest homini, cum ad eam perfecte pervenire non possit. Illud tamen modicum quod ex ea habetur praeponderat omnibus quae per alias scientias cognoscuntur".

[166] *O.c.*, n. 59: "Inter causas altissimas etiam est fina-lis causa...Unde oportet quod haec scientia consideret ultimum et universalem finem omnium. Et sic omnes aliae scientiae in eam ordinantur sicut in finem".

[167] *In I Metaph.*, l.2, n. 47: "Subiecta earum addunt ad subiecta scientiarum universalium".

[168] *S.C.G.* I 1: "Oportet igitur ultimum finem totius universi esse bonum intellectum. Hoc autem est veritas". Cf. also *In II Metaph.*, l.2, n. 290ff.

[169] M. Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?*

CHAPTER ONE

BEING

Anything which is real, from a stone to an impression, from a colour to a certain place in the universe, is a being. Being is not one class of things: all things, whatever class they belong to, are beings.

Metaphysics has being as its subject-matter. In a well-known text Aristotle writes that the question of what reality is was raised in the past and is regularly raised anew[1]. Their being real (*ousia*) is what is most basic to all things, since they are one thing or another, of such and such a kind, because they exist. For this reason metaphysics studies things to the extent that they are real and possess reality in common (*ens commune*). Hence metaphysics does not examine beings in their variety or in their generic, specific and individual differences; it also renounces the study of being as material, since it seeks to know the deeper values of being common to all classes of beings. Metaphysics is a journey to the depth of the things around us and of ourselves.

The root of the English word "is" (*asus* in Sanscrit) means to exist. The Greek verb for "to be" means to be real, to be present[2]. The Greek language has a wide range of possibilities in using the verb "to be", a fact that was undoubtedly promoted philosophical reflection. While the Greek philosophers originally only examined material being, Parmenides dug deeper and sought, underneath the changes and multiplicity in things, permanent being which is one with itself and does not change. This being is true and eternal, manifests itself to the intellect as it is and cannot be thought otherwise than as one and unchangeable. Parmenides is the first Western thinker to have had a metaphysical intuition of being.

Heraclitus of Ephesus, on the other hand, considered becoming to be the underlying form of being. Confronted with this contrast in the views of two thinkers of primordial importance, Plato sought a solution by holding, on the one hand, that true being is unchangeable and identical with itself; opposed to it, on the other hand, is the changing, less genuine reality of the material world[3]. Unlike the Sophists, Plato wanted to know

[1] *Metaph.* 1028 b 2.

[2] Cf. J. Klowski, "Zum Entstehen der Begriffe Sein und Nichts", in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 49(1967)121-148; 225-254.

[3] In Plato's doctrine the ideas or forms are that which really is (*Tim.* 27d and 28a).

that which really is. The philosophical position he adopted implies that every science has as its object an area of reality of its own: the world of ideas, the intermediary things, physical bodies. In his study of being Plato emphasizes the content of being (essence: οὐσία) rather than actual existence; to him the *idea* of being is more important than the actuality of things.

Aristotle bridged the gap between the world of being and that of becoming by recognizing the material things as substances, i.e. things that exist on their own, to which genuine being is attributable. Substances are the focus of reality and the foundation supporting the accidental aspects of things. In one of his brilliant insights Aristotle develops the fact that the word 'being' is used in various senses. This means that the same word may signify different forms and ways of being real,–primary modes of being as the substance and derived forms as the accidents. Heidegger's criticism to the effect that Aristotle by concentrating on the study of individual beings, forgot being (*esse*) itself, is not correct: Aristotle assigns a central place to the act of being in substances. But St. Thomas is right in asserting that Aristotle did not raise himself above the study of substances and did not investigate Being itself, for the Stagirite did not reach the insight that the limited being (*esse*) of the things we know must be explained as a participation in Self-subsistent Being Itself[4].

The Different Meanings of Being

In *Metaphysics* V 7 Aristotle lists the following meanings of the term being:

(a) The word being is be used *per se* and *per accidens*. A single substance or an accident is a being *per se*, whereas a term expressing a composite thing is a being *per accidens*. A tree, a stone, a colour are beings *per se*, but a stick is a being *per accidens*, because the form and function expressed by the word stick are not essential to the wood from which the stick is made. In Aristotle's metaphysics only being *per se* is investigated, whereas in modern philosophy, in particular in phenomenology, beings *per accidens* are also considered. To give one example of such an *ens per accidens*, in phenomenology 'encounter' is an important theme for research; but ontologically it comprizes several independent components. Because of its stress on what appears rather

[4] *Summa theologiae* I 44, 2.

than on being, phenomenology can hardly provide an insight into the deepest nature of being. In his commentary on *Metaph.* VI, chs 2-4 Thomas writes that the sciences deal with things (*entia secundum rem*) and that *entia per accidens* are only real in name (what he means is that they are not one being)[5]. The latter are the object of sophistry and do not constitute the conclusion of a process of becoming in the strict sense.

The fact that *entia per accidens* are not the object of metaphysics does not imply, as J. Owens claims, that being (*esse*) is also excluded from metaphysics by Aristotle[6]. Being is after all a substantial predicate, that is, it belongs to the very heart of existing things. Still less does it mean that metaphysics does not study accidental being: accidents each possess a content of being of their own (which, needless to say, includes the relation to their substance). Those accidents which are not dependent on matter, are considered in metaphysics. The expression *entia per accidens* of the text refers to accidental complexes which occur exceptionally (*ut in paucioribus*) and do not have their cause in themselves. A metaphysician who plays the flute is such an *ens per accidens*, for there is no direct causal link between his metaphysical speculations and the art of playing the flute[7].

(b) Being *per se* is divided according to the various modes in which a thing can 'be'. These modes of being are deduced from the ways in which something can be predicated of something else[8]. St. Thomas provides the following explanation of the predicaments mentioned by Aristotle[9]: a predicate can be said of a subject in a threefold manner: (aa) such that it is this subject; (bb) such that it is in the subject, and this is either according to the material principle of the subject, (we then speak of quantity), or according to the formal principle of this subject, (quality) or else in such a way that the predicate does not lie absolutely in the subject but concerns something else, (we call this a relation); (cc) such that the predicate is derived from something outside the subject, e.g. being clothed, or is it like time, place and position, or finally the

[5] *In VI Metaph.*, lectio 2, n. 1176.

[6] See his *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, Toronto 1963, 309: "This treatment must mean that Aristotle is leaving the act of existence entirely outside the scope of his philosophy".

[7] See L. Dewan, "Being *per se*, being *per accidens* and St. Thomas Metaphysics", *Science et Esprit* 30(1978)169-184.

[8] Cf. *Metaph.* V, ch.16. St. Thomas explains this as follows: "Quotiens ens dicitur, id est quot modis aliquid praedicatur, toties esse significatur aliquid" (*In V Metaph.*, lectio 9, n. 889).

[9] *In V Metaph.*, lectio 9, n. 891.

predicate may be partially within and partially outside the subject, as in doing and undergoing.

Despite several criticisms levelled against the theory of the categories of being, realist metaphysics, in particular the philosophy of being of Aquinas, considers the predicaments as the objectively given modes of being real, independent of any consideration by man.

(c) Being is used, moreover, as linking verb (copula). In this usage the emphasis lies more on being than on that which is. Being, as a matter of fact, displays a certain duality inasmuch as it denotes a subject or a certain content which is real. In an extended use of the term even those constructions of the mind which we conceive as "things", but which as such are not real, are called beings. St. Thomas notes that "everything about which an affirmatory statement can be made, even if it posits nothing in reality, can be called being; in this way privations and negations are called beings; for, after all, we state that an affirmation is contrary to a negation and that blindness is in the eye"[10].

This new meaning of being creates a difficulty: thus far we were dealing with such things as the predicaments sc. being as a noun, but now Aristotle switches to being as a verb. In the Greek language this shift is not surprising since to denote being as a noun the participle form of the verb is used; it is understood that we speak of something real, that is of something existing. But when 'being' is used in the form of the copula, we leave out the signification of "something" real but assert (or deny) the being real of the composition of a subject and a predicate. The usage of the verb "to be" in this meaning rests on the being of things which is the basis for all our statements about reality. Privations and negations are expressed analogously to positive determinations of being.

Aquinas is convinced that this use of the verb to be as copula is based upon a first, absolute sense of the verb, scil. that of "being real" (*actualitas*). "To be", he writes, is the reality of all acts; bringing all things to reality the act of being is the perfection of all perfections[11]. Aquinas expresses this also as follows: "is" as such signifies to be real in whatever way. Therefore we can also use this verb to signify a more limited way of being real, such as "this flower is red" or "Peter is a human being"[12].

[10] *De ente et essentia*, ch.1. The division into *ens in natura* and *ens rationis* (*S.Th.* I-II 8, 1) must be reduced to this division.

[11] *Q.d. de potentia*, q. 7, a.2 ad 9: "Unde . . . esse est actualitas omnium actuum et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum".

[12] St. Thomas argues this point in his *In I Perihermeneias*, lectio 5, n.73: "...hoc verbum *est* consignificat compositionem quia non eam principaliter significat sed ex consequenti;

When the verb 'to be' is the only predicate and is used absolutely, it has its primary meaning of actual existence. An example given by St. Thomas is the proposition: "Socrates is"[13]. But usually the verb 'to be' combines a subject and a predicate: in these cases it denotes the reality or truth of the composition of both terms.

Aristotle did not reach this insight about the verb 'to be'. Even if he writes that it is impossible to know the what-it-is of a thing if we do not first know whether it is[14], he nonetheless did not conceive "to be' as being real in an absolute sense without a determining essence. Aquinas, on the other hand, points out that the fundamental meaning of the verb 'to be' is not that of the connection of the subject and the predicate in a judgment, but that of being real. The function of the copula is derived from this. The fact that a thing is or is in a particular way (which we express in a judgment) is a partial effect of the riches in contents and the power of reality which the verb 'to be' signifies in the first place[15]. From this it follows that 'to be' is not just 'to be real' or 'to be present', but signifies the dynamic source and principle which makes real whatever is demanded by the essence of the subject it actualizes. One can now even conceive being as subsistent, that is, not as the actualization of an essence but as unlimited reality and perfection by itself.

On this point St. Thomas's doctrine is fundamentally opposed to the theory of such Neopositivists as R. Carnap. The latter argues that metaphysicians do not take sufficiently into consideration what he calls a defect in our European languages, namely the fact that the verb 'to be' serves both as copula and to express absolute existence. In the latter sense, however, its use is meaningless (e.g., in the sentence "God exists")[16]. But by this assertion which he fails to justify Carnap rejects the process of analogy that occurs in our usage of the verb 'to be' (and not only in Indo-European languages). He also refuses in advance to accept a deeper foundation for our statements about reality. In the

significat enim primo illud quod cadit in intellectu per modum actualitatis absolute: nam *est* simpliciter dictum significat in actu esse et ideo significat per modum verbi. Quia vero actualitas, quam principaliter significat hoc verbum *est*, est communiter actualitas omnis formae, vel actus substantialis vel accidentalis, inde est quod cum volumus significare quamcumque formam vel actum actualiter inesse alicui subiecto, significamus illud per hoc verbum *est* simpliciter secundum praesens tempus. Et ideo ex consequenti hoc verbum *est* significat compositionem".

[13] *In II Perihermen.*, lectio 2.

[14] *Anal. Post.* 93 a 26.

[15] See U. Degl'Innocenti, "La distinzione reale nel *De ente et essentia*", in *Doctor communis* 31(1978)20-28.

[16] "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache", in *Erkenntnis* 2(1931)233.

metaphysics of Thomas real being in its most profound nature becomes precisely the object of our investigation. The aspect of being real common to all things (be it in an analogous manner) is not something lying outside things (unless insofar as it is thought in one general concept by the intellect which abstracts it from existing things), but is the reality of beings themselves[17].

(d) Being is, moreover, divided into possible being (being not actualized but which may become actual) and actual being which is this possibility brought to its realization or is just actually existent by itself (*ens in potentia; ens in actu*). We come to know this division on the basis of the changes we observe and because of the fact that we ourselves are able to do and to undergo something.—The insight that being can be in a state of potency was alive in the Ionic philosophy of nature but Parmenides rejected possibility and becoming. Aristotle formulated the distinction between being in potentiality and being *in actu*.

This division is psychologically and ontologically the first division of being and even precedes the division into substance and accidents. The relationship between a substance and its accidents requires this division between possible and actual being: inasmuch as the substance is determined by the accidents it is in potency to these forms; in their turn the accidents are actualized and sustained in being by the substance.

On occasion Aristotle and Aquinas give a shortened version of this division of being, omitting the first (a) and the last members (d). In these texts they say that being signifies either the categories of being or else the truth of propositions[18]. The above-mentioned division refers to being as found in our everyday experience, the so-called "being first known by us". It is taken up in metaphysics, although here we abstract from certain categories which imply materiality. The being that presents itself immediately to human experience is created being; it is, however, known by means of an abstract concept which does not explicitly indicate that it is created being[19].

[17] See James B. Reichman, "Immanent, Transcendent and Subsistent *Esse*", in *The Thomist* 38(1974)332-369.

[18] We refer to *S.Th.* I 3, 4 ad 2; *Quodl.* XII 1 ad 1; *In V Metaph.*, lectio 9, n.895. For more texts see R.W. Schmidt, S.J, *The Domain of Logic according to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, The Hague 1946, 232. For a detailed survey of the meaning and division of being see W. Kluxen, "Das Seiende und seine Prinzipien", in *Grundprobleme der grossen Philosophen*, Göttingen 1978, 177-220.

[19] I 44, 1 ad 1: "Being caused does not belong to the notion of being as such; nevertheless, it is consequent upon those things which belong to its notion".

Being is the First Concept

Since we assume that human thinking develops gradually and proceeds from that which is most general and is vaguely known to a more particular, clearer and distinct knowledge, we conclude that the concept of being is the first concept known by us, as it is the most indeterminate and general. St. Thomas confirms emphatically that being is the first concept that enters the human mind. He recalls that Avicenna taught this, but he finds it already in Proclus[20]. Aquinas gives this additional explanation: nature is always ordered to unity, and for this reason all things that are known must be contained in one thing which can only be being, since being is the most general of things. As sight sees colour, so the intellect grasps being and that which pertains to being as such[21]. In this way the whole of man's intellectual life is mapped out: it must be in contact with reality; it is ordered to reality[22]. The perfection of our cognitive life is the knowledge of the Absolute Being we call God. The insight that being is the first concept, also implies that things and the world are experienced by us directly, i.e. it is the basis of Thomist realism which excludes all doubt about what is immediately perceived and asserts that the position of critical realism is untenable[23].

Thus the first concept we acquire is general and as yet indeterminate. But 'indeterminate' does not mean empty or bereft of meaning and reality, as was suggested by Nietzsche who called concepts like being "the last puff of smoke of evaporating reality"[24]. On the contrary, being means all that is real and stores within itself the reality of everything that exists in one way or another. Given that 'being' is the first thought we have, we cannot clarify or define it by means of something else. We can only say that being means "that which is". Apparently there is a kind of duality in our concept of being which we explicitate by this expression. That which is most proper to and most profound in being is not "THAT which is" but "BEING REAL". Aquinas states this repeatedly and

[20] *In I Metaph.*, lectio 2, n.46; *In Librum de causis*, prop.6, n.174. Cf. Avicenna, *Metaphysica* I 6,f.72,r.2.

[21] *Summa contra gentiles*, II, c.68.

[22] *Q.d. de veritate, q.1,a.1*: "anima nata est convenire cum omni ente"; *S.Th.* I 78, 1: "Res nata...animae coniungi et in anima esse".

[23] Critical realism asserts that one must first investigate whether our knowledge can really grasp reality. —However, if it is not immediately evident to us that we do so right away, how can we ever be certain about it? See E. Gilson, *Réalisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance*, Paris 1939, 77.

[24] *Götzen-Dämmerung* VIII 78.

[25] *Q.d.de veritate* 1, 1 ad 3: "Ratio entis ab actu essendi sumitur, non ab eo cui convenit actus essendi".

emphatically: "The meaning and kernel of being lies in the act of being and not in that to which the act of being is attributed"[25]. "Being states no essence but merely the act of being"[26]. "The noun being (*ens*) is derived from the being (*esse*) of the thing"[27].

In these statements Aquinas refers to the fact that our concept of being means in the first place and in its formal sense the being real of a thing and in the second place that to which this being real is attributed[28]. This concept, however, is not yet the concept of being as a verb (*esse*), which we acquire by a further abstraction from what we experience in our statements about reality (in the so-called second operation of the intellect). Having acquired the concept of being we proceed to devote attention to the content of being and divide that which is into the categories or genera of being. Metaphysics follows this development: its object is being; it studies the division into the categories or predicaments and attempts to reach the knowledge of the ultimate cause of being.

The concept of being (something that is really) is abstracted by us from the concrete things with which our senses bring us into contact and which they present to us. The content of the concept of being is not this individual real thing, but the 'being real' of something thought in a general concept which as general exists only in our intellect, even though in forming this concept, we know,—because of the cooperation of the sense-faculties with the intellect,—that an individual reality is present[29]. In the so-called second operation of our intellect (the union or separation of a subject and a predicate in a judgment) we express this being real in relation to the thing which is concretely present to us in and by means of sense perception. This brings us to the level indicated in (c) in the division of being mentioned above[30]. By means of further reflection we can finally conceive being real as such, independent of a subject. Continued reflection within the framework of St. Thomas' metaphysics brings us to the knowledge of being (*esse*) as perfection. Finally we

[26] *In VI Metaph.*, lectio 2, n.553: "Ens autem non dicit quidditatem sed solum actum essendi"; "Ens imponitur ab actu essendi".

[27] *In I Sent.*, d.25, q.1, a.4: "Nomen entis sumitur ab esse rei". This means that our first concept "that which is" is derived from the things that are real and expresses this "being real"common to all existing things. However, our concept of the verb "to be" is derived from the noun "being" as St. Thomas explicitly says.

[28] Silvester Ferrariensis calls this "ens particulariter sumptum" (*In I Contra Gentes*, c.25, VIII).

[29] *S.C.G.* I 26: "Multo igitur minus et ipsum esse commune est aliquid praeter omnes res existentes nisi in intellectu solum".

[30] P. 36f. The formation of a concept is followed by a judgment. The establishment of the predicaments of being (however rudimentary their distinction may be in pre-philosophical thinking) also involves the second operation of the mind.

attain the insight that God is Self-subsistent Being itself (*ipsum esse per se subsistens*), which means that our concept of being falls short if we use it to denote God's being.

On the other hand, when we consider 'THAT which is', we form the concept of "thing" (*res*). The development depicted above takes place within the framework of the first concept of being. Our next concepts are not new concepts in the sense of concepts "placed beside" or "existing independently", but must be viewed rather as determinations of the concept of being. All our concepts, indeed, have being as their content in one way or another. The category of quantitative juxtaposition of concepts does not apply to intellectual life, the unity of which surpasses even the unity of organic life. St. Thomas calls the first concepts and judgments *rationes seminales*, that is to say, basic forms which are as it were the seed from which all other concepts and judgments follow[31]. He also speaks of a reduction of all other concepts to being[32].

Some interpreters base themselves on Thomas' statement "being is that which is" to argue that we know being in a judgment. They claim to find support in texts such as *Summa contra gentiles* I c.55, which say that we know the terms of a statement (judgment) simultaneously, and not first the subject and then the predicate[33]. Possibly they are also influenced by Frege and his followers, who consider subject and predicate as functions of the whole sentence. In their view the distinction between subject and predicate comes only later[34]. Against this we object that subject and predicate taken in themselves (in the things signified by them) are conceived earlier, but taken formally as subject and predicate are simultaneous. Furthermore, St. Thomas distinguishes repeatedly and emphatically the first and second operations of the intellect with the result that one cannot drop this distinction without doing violence to the texts. The judgment "this is", which is utterly different from the concept of "that which is", does indeed pertain to the second operation of the mind: the newly acquired concept of the act of being (*esse*) is ascribed to a thing and fuses with it: we make a statement about concrete reality.

[31] *Q.d. de veritate*, 2, 1.

[32] *Ibid.* 1, 1.

[33] See *S.Th.* I-II 113, 7 ad 2.

[34] Cf.E. Ponferrada, "Los primeros principios", in *Sapientia* 34(1979)175.

Being is an Analogous Concept

The question whether the term 'being' is a univocal word was raised in an acute form by Plato: hot and cold are opposed realities, he writes. How then can being be predicated of both? Is being a third term which is added to the two others?[35]. In his later doctrine Plato reduced the whole of reality to two principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad (also called the Great and Small and the Infinite). This theory appears to presuppose a sort of univocity in the concept of being, just as the doctrine of participation, which he also advocated.

There are some slight indications that Aristotle himself originally accepted the Platonic reduction of the whole of being to two first principles. If so, it cannot be excluded that he thought of being as an all-embracing genus. However, many texts of the *Corpus aristotelicum* explicitly reject that being is a genus: the categories (the genera of being) are not reducible the one to the other[36]. Aristotle even coined the well-known expression that "being is said in many different ways" (τὸ δὲ ὂν πολλαχως λέγεται). The problem of the univocity of being was raised again by the Peripatetics. Some of them, like Aspasius, appear to have viewed being as the common genus of all things, while others, particularly Alexander of Aphrodisias, rejected this view emphatically[37]. Even a profound metaphysician like Avicenna appears to incline towards a view whereby the content of being is seen as univocal[38]. The reason behind this position is that he makes essences realities in their own right. As such they have a particular content which for each essence remains one and the same even when multiplied. Likewise being has one univocal meaning which it retains. But according to Avicenna one may also consider essences (a) in the things of which they are the essences and (b) in the human mind.

Duns Scotus followed Avicenna: he conceives being as an essence which is neither singular nor universal, and so it has a univocal content. Being signifies something which is apt to exist. Of course, Scotus acknowledges that in fact being is diversified in things, but he wants to study it in abstraction from its individual realizations. Only if we do so, we have a metaphysical notion of being, for metaphysics cannot have the individual and contingent as its object. The subject of metaphysics is that

[35] *Sophistes* 243 cff.
[36] Cf. *Metaph.* IV 2 and 998 b 22.
[37] See Simplicius, *In Phys.* 131, 12ff.
[38] *Metaphysica*, tract.1, c.2: "Ens dicitur per unam rationem de omnibus de quibus dicitur".

which can receive existence, scil. the existible[39]. Scotus extends this univocity of being to our statements about God: without univocity it is senseless to apply the word 'being'to God[40]. When we say that God is being we may not yet know whether he is finite or infinite. The concept of being does not include either one of these qualifications, but prescinds from them and other modalities and only signifies being. Those who say that the term 'being' when applied to God is analogous deceive themselves, for in fact they use a univocal concept[41].

R. McInerny explains the difference between Scotus' view and the doctrine of St. Thomas as follows: Aquinas accepts that analogous terms have the same *res significata* (sometimes called 'common notion') but he holds emphatically that the analogata (the things of which the analogous name is used, e.g. God and created things) refer in different ways to this common notional content, so that when the same name is applied to these different things, a different way of signifying results (*modus significandi*)[42]. The analogous use of terms presupposes that one is aware of the total difference (for instance, between God and created things). If so, one knows at the same time that the name applied to these things signifies 'being', 'wisdom', etc. in different ways.

The position of Scotus exercised a powerful influence on later thought: the univocity of being is quite generally admitted in modern philosophy (as it was in the past) and those who defend analogy are a minority. Ockham develops Scotus' theory in the sense that he asserts that univocity applies to the level of the concept but that outside in the physical world there is sheer diversity[43]. Suarez believes that the unity of the concept of being prevails over the theory of analogy which is uncertain[44]. Apparently the shift to the logical order, the preponderance of the knowing subject and the desire for clarity and certitude have become the major characteristic of all metaphysical endeavour.

On account of this controversy it is necessary to clarify the doctrine of analogy according to Aquinas. Thomas would concede to Scotus that

[39] *O.c.*, 95.
[40] *Ord.* I, d.3, n.26ff.
[41] Besides a study by Wolter (see p. 63, note 2) one should consult E. Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot. Introduction à ses positions fondamentales*, Paris 1952, 96-99; L.Honnefelder, *Ens inquantum ens. Der Begriff des Seienden als solches als Gegenstand der Metaphysik nach der Lehre des Johannes Duns Scotus. BGPTMA,NF.* 16, Münster 1979; O. Boulnois, *Jean Duns Scot. Sur la connaissance de Dieu et l' univocité de l'étant.* Introduction, traduction et commentaire, Paris 1988.
[42] "Scotus and Univocity", in *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti. Acta congressus scot. internationalis* (1966), vol. 2, 115-126, Roma 1968.
[43] *In I Sent.*, d.22, q.9 (*Opera theologica* II, p.312).
[44] *Disp.metaph.* II 2, 36.

as a concept the content of being is originally one, namely that which is real. However, at an early stage we begin to discern altogether different ways of being real (such as potential and actual being, substances and accidents), but in expressing this differentiation we nonetheless make use of the same concept of being which is apparently adjusted in order to refer to various ways of being real. In this way being becomes a so-called analogous concept; it denotes things which plainly differ but of which the same conceptual content can be predicated (*res significata*).

The term analogy came to philosophy from mathematics. Aristotle uses the proportion expressed by analogy (a : b = c : d) as a heuristic principle and also in order to point out resemblances between various classes of living beings (wings : birds = fins : fish ; primary matter is to substantial form as clay or timber is to the external form given to it). In his *Metaphysics* he calls the causes and principles of the various beings analogous[45]. He also speaks of an analogous use of the term 'one'[46] and suggests that the good can likewise be predicated analogously[47]. As regards being Aristotle repeatedly emphasizes his basic insight that it is used in various ways[48], but he never calls being an analogous term[49]. It is true that he compares the ways in which the term is used with the various meanings of the word 'healthy' and emphasizes that the genera or classes of being have a different relationship to a first, viz. substance in which being is realized fully[50].

The Greek commentators brought these two groups together in one class, the so-called equivocals on purpose[51], which must be distinguished from the equivocals by chance (words which sound and spell the same but happen to have two unrelated meanings). They associated these with the Neoplatonic metaphysics of emanation from and return to the One[52]. In this view a lesser or greater distance from the One determines the degree of likeness to the first principle and so its analogous character.

[45] 1070 a 31ff.
[46] 1016 b 31ff.
[47] *Eth.Nic.* 1096 b 26.
[48] On this point see H. Wagner in *Kantstudien* 53(1961)75-91.
[49] Cf.B. Montagnes, La doctrine de l'analogie de l'être d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin, Louvain-Paris 1963, 41 note.
[50] *Metaph.* IV 2.
[51] See Porphyrius, *In Categ.* 65, 18ff.
[52] Cf. P. Grenet, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin a-t-il trouvé dans Aristote l'*analogia entis* ", in *L'attualità della problematica aristotelica. Atti del Congresso Franco-Italico su Aristotele* (Padova 1967), Padova 1970, 153-175.
[53] The first name has some basis in Aquinas' earlier writings.

Averroes in his Commentary on the fourth book of the *Metaphysics* calls 'being' an analogous term and henceforth 'analogous' will be used to denote terms said of different things which show a proportionality as well as to signify terms which express various relationships to a first thing, such as 'healthy' does with regard to health. This latter form is frequently called *analogia proportionis* or *analogia attributionis*[53]. In his *De ente et essentia* Aquinas does not yet call the plurivocal use of the term being an analogy[54], but he does so in later works, particularly in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics*[55].

The manner in which 'being' is analogous requires further clarification. However, it should be noted first that in both kinds of analogical use of terms there is always one thing of which such a term is predicated first or in the most proper sense[56]. Thus 'substance' is the main *analogatum* of being which is predicated of it in the most proper sense. Only after we have discovered the First Being, God, and after we have left behind 'common being'[57], does God become the main *analogatum* for the new concept of being we then form.

According to Cajetan the analogous concept of being is predicated of substance and accidents proportionally: a substance is to its existence as an accident is to its reality. But there is no identity between their respective acts of being, since then there would no longer be any analogy but univocity[58]. It is undoubtedly correct that, with regard to substance and the various accidents, we have on each occasion different ways of being real. St. Thomas himself also speaks of a proportionality in the usage of the concept of being[59].

The analogy of proportionality, however, does not adequately express the analogy of the concept of being. Our concept of being is predicated in the first place and in the full sense of the term of substance which alone and without qualification is that which is. When we begin to distinguish between substance and accidents, we recognize the proper manner of being of the latter and understand that substance is the basis of their being. We acquire the insight that accidents are related to

[54] *O.c.*, c.1, n.3.
[55] *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 1, n.535.
[56] *S.Th.* I 13, 6:"...in omnibus nominibus quae de pluribus analogice dicuntur necesse est quod omnia dicuntur per respectum ad aliquod unum".
[57] Common being (*ens commune*) is being as studied in metaphysics which abstracts from particular forms of being and from material being in order to consider being as such.
[58] *De nominum analogia*, c.4: "...unius ratio non claudit id quod claudit ratio alterius".
[59] *In III Sent.*, d.1, q.1, a.1:"...vel unum analogia seu proportione sicut substantia et qualitas in ente; quia sicut se habet substantia ad esse sibi debitum, ita et qualitas ad esse suo generi conveniens". See also *In V Metaph.*, lectio 12, n.916.

substance and depend on it as on their subject. This relationship is clearly more fundamental than the proportionality mentioned above. The use of this analogy of being presupposes, however, a deeper knowledge of the relationship of substance to its accidents. Again, at a further stage of our investigation, when we have understood that God is Self-subsistent Being itself, we must remodel this concept: being is attributable to God in a completely unique way surpassing everything. From this it follows that the analogy of being is not adequately described by proportionality, as Cajetan holds[60]. 'Being' and 'good', when stated of accidents, actually do include a reference to substance.

By comparing the usage of the term 'being' with 'healthy' Aristotle makes it clear that he sees a certain correspondence between these two cases of analogy. Different things called 'healthy' do have a certain relation with health (e.g. that of an efficient cause or of an external sign). Something similar applies to 'being'. However, St. Thomas points out that in both cases this relationship is not the same: substance is the subject of its accidents, which are its determinations[61]. There is an intrinsic relationship and something of being is found in the accidents, whereas this is not the case in the relationship of healthy food to the health of the body. This point is of great importance when we determine the relation of created things to God: created things do have a certain likeness to God, on the basis of which analogous statements about both are possible[62]. That which belongs to God as identical with his essence, is possessed by created things through participation. This so-called transcendental analogy between God and created things differs from the predicamental analogy between substance and accidents to the extent that because of the infinite distance between God and creatures there can be no definite formal correspondence between them, but only a proportionality[63] or, as Aquinas expresses it in a later period, a relationship of effect to cause. Created things as effects of God have no perfections in common with him but show only a distant likeness to their Cause[64].

The analogy of being can, however, be determined with greater precision. B. Montagnes asserts that St. Thomas, later on, in particular in the *Summa contra Gentiles* I, c.34, rejected this analogy of proportion as unsuited to express the analogy of being and that, as a result, the

[60] *Commentary on the Summa theologiae*, I 13, 6.
[61] See *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 1, n.537-539.
[62] *In I Sent.*, d.19, q.5, a.2 ad 1; *Q.d. de ver.*, q.21, a.4 ad 2.
[63] *Q.d. de ver.*, q.3, a.1 ad 7.
[64] Cf. *Q.d. de pot.*, q.7, a.7 ad 2.
[65] *O.c.*, p.73.

doctrine of Cajetan becomes untenable[65]. But this interpretation of the mind of Aquinas does not seem quite correct. In the *Quaestio disputata de Potentia*, q.7, a.7, a late and most carefully written treatise, St. Thomas divides up analogy as follows: (a) a term can be stated analogously of two things on the basis of the fact that each of them has a (different) relationship to a third which precedes both; (b) a term can be stated analogously of two things according to the relation of the one to the other (*per respectum unius ad alterum*). The one is prior to the other[66]. The term, 'healthy'(as predicated of food and certain potential signs of health) is given as an example of the first type of analogy: two different relationships to health in its proper sense are denoted. St. Thomas mentions 'healthy' stated of a healthy animal and 'healthy' predicated of that which causes health (e.g., good food or good medicine). What causes health is prior to it. Now this second type of analogy is that of substance and accidents: the term 'being'is predicated of both, but in such a way that substance is being in the proper sense and is prior; accidents are beings to the extent that they are related to substance, each accident in a particular way proper to it.

One might call this second type of analogy that of proportion, provided one realizes that there is no strict proportionality. What is striking in the examples of both texts is that 'healthy' and 'being' are used for both types of analogy. What at first sight looks like a mistake or an unintelligible passage, makes in reality perfect sense: it indicates that we ourselves make our concepts analogous after we have discovered the underlying ontological structures and then use one word to indicate two different relationships. An increasingly precise knowledge of the difference between things makes us see that a quality or perfection ascribed to one thing, belongs to another thing in a different way. There remains a community of the *res significata* (the content we signify by the term), but we have come to realize that this content (e.g., wisdom in God and man; being in God and man), is realized in an entirely different way in both cases. Hence our statements "God is wise" and "Solomon is wise" become really different, for wisdom in God cannot but be totally other. Likewise our proposition "God is wise" must not be understood as expressing a composition in God. If we look at the analogy of being

[66] The same divison is found in *S.Th.* I 13, 5.
[67] St. Thomas observes that a logician operates with one univocal concept of substance, but that a metaphysician uses an analogous concept, according to the different levels of reality at which these substances are placed (corporeal, incorporeal things; sublunar or heavenly bodies). See *In II Sent.*, d.3, q.1, a.1, ad 2.

in this way, it becomes evident that Scotus' assertion that we use a univocal concept of being when predicating it of God and of created things presupposes either that one has not yet understood the real ontological situation or that one holds that our language remains separate of it and develops at a logical level. In other words, Scotus's position implies that the logical use of terms prevails over a philosophical approach[67]. For Aquinas, on the other hand, our concepts develop with the insights we gain and the judgments we form. Science and wisdom are not just a growing sum of facts we know but mean a deeper insight. A judgment terminates in an insight which yields new knowledge and therefore a concept. If we know what we are doing when ascribing being to accidents (as compared to the being of substance), the resulting concept of being cannot but be different from that of the being of substance.

The Intuition of Being

A final question to be dealt with in this chapter is that of the intuition of being. By 'intuition' we mean a clear and direct perception of something, so that it stands out in evidence before the mind. Besides this intellectual intuition we are speaking of, a strong impression on the senses and the faculty of imagination may occur which, if transposed to the level of the intellect, can lead to a less correct or mistaken idea of reality. With regard to being as the first thing we apprehend a philosophical intuition may take place, scil. the intellect sees and experiences things under the aspect of their beingness as that which is *real*. In the realism of Aquinas being as the actuality of all acts and the perfection of all perfections is the fruit of such an intuition. But other philosophers have often put forward a more limited, more concrete aspect of being than that which man experiences first. Thus Heraclitus considered change as the basic reality of all things, while Teilhard de Chardin, on the other hand, emphasizes materiality and solid permanency[68]. Jean-Paul Sartre saw reality as a sticky mass threatening to swallow up man, with the result that our contact with reality provokes disgust and anxiety[69]. Heidegger in his turn emphasizes process in being: being shows itself to conceal itself again.

[68] See J. Guitton, *La signification du Kosmos*, 25: "Teilhard, vers l'âge de six ans, eut une expérience: il avait trouvé une clé de charrue, il la touchait, il la palpait. Elle donna à l'enfant l'impression de l'être, de la consistance et cette espèce d'adoration de ce qu'il appellera plus tard 'la matière'".

[69] See in particular his novel *La nausée*, but also *L'être et le néant*.

"Because Being (*physis*) consists in appearing, in presenting aspects, it finds itself essentially and hence necessarily and continuously capable of an appearance which precisely covers up and hides that what Being truly is, that is its openness"[70]. According to this view the presence of being depends also on man and is subject to history: "Being man belongs to the essence of being, inasmuch as the essence of Being needs man in order to be as Being"[71]. According to St. Thomas these views do not grasp the innermost reality of being, but are to a large extent dependent on images drawn from imagination. Nor do they pertain to metaphysics, which has as its subject being in general.

[70] *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Tübingen 1953, 79.

[71] *Die Technik und die Kehre*, 38.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROPERTIES OF BEING, I

A History of the Transcendental Concepts to Aquinas

As has been pointed out in the *Introduction* St. Thomas intimates that the study of being is followed by that of a number of universal concepts such as 'thing', 'unity', etc. Indeed, in metaphysics as well as in theology certain terms such as unity, truth and goodness have long been considered properties of being, respectively of God himself. Their scientific treatment began to take shape in the first part of the thirteenth century and was given a definite systematic framework by Aquinas. However, although most philosophers continued to speak of unity, truth and goodness, until the time of Kant, at the end of the seventeenth century these terms no longer signified something really characteristic of all things; they were now understood as an answer of the human subject, moulding the neutral facts it perceives into its own a priori categories.

The term 'transcendental'

Before we go into the history of the transcendental concepts we must first consider the term *transcendental* itself[1]. Etymologically the Latin word *transcendere* as well as its Greek original ὑπερβαίνειν, signify "to go beyond" or "to lie beyond". Such terms as "being", "thing", "something", "true", etc. are said to be characteristic of all things, substances as well as accidents. Therefore they do not belong a particular genus or class of things (for instance, that of plants, colours or magnitude) but are above all particular classes (categories) of being, yet proper to each of them.

One may also use the term in other meanings: it can denote the total transcendence of God, or a limited transcendence of a few classes of being. In the latter sense "multitude" is a (limited) transcendental, as is "movement".

Thus far the term referred to things but Kant gave it an entirely new

[1] On the history of the meaning of this term see H. Knittermeyer, *Der Terminus Transzendental in seiner historischen Entwicklung bis zu Kant*, Marburg 1920. See also C. Fabro, "Il Transcendentale tomistico", in *Angelicum* 60(1983) 534 - 558. An early use of *transcendere* in its philosophical sense is found in St. Augustine's *De civitate Dei* and Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* V.

meaning, sc. that the human intellect is beyond things; the intellect assigns meaning to and organizes the brute material of sense perception with the help of certain apriori forms which come with man's sensitivity (the forms of space and time) and his intellect (Kant means such forms as substance, accident, unity, plurality, cause, effect, contingence and necessity, etc.). Kant's main work *The Critique of Pure Reason* aims at consolidating this transcendence of the human mind. The knowing subject is not determined by experience but rather itself determines experience. We speak of a transcendental philosophy when it ascribes to the knowing subject a more or less absolute role in regard to things[2]. Kant's theory signalled a total reversal of classical metaphysics. Its influence was pervasive and a good deal of modern philosophy has not yet found its way back to the ontological study of the transcendental terms.

J. Maréchal, among others, attempted to introduce this current of thought into scholasticism and asserted that the basis of the certainty and the contents of our knowledge lies not so much in the reception of evident facts from things as in the natural urge of our intellect for knowledge. But this view is rejected by realist philosophers: the intellect is naturally ordered to truth, and this ordering means an openness and suitability to reception of certain knowledge without itself being creative of certitude. The first principles are accordingly not a product of the knowing subject but an intellectual expression of evident, fundamental structures of reality.

The origin of the theory of the properties of being

Tracing the history of the transcendental concepts we must go back to Parmenides. The philosophy of being begins with this great metaphysician (approx. 530-450 B.C.). In his doctrinal poem we find a first attempt at a doctrine of the properties of being. Parmenides states that being and thinking are the same. In this way he seems to express the intelligibility of being. Furthermore, he posits that being is identical with itself, one and unchangeable.

[2] In Kant's day the expression "philosophia transcendentalis" had come to be used to denote metaphysics (e.g. by Franz Albert Alpinus and Johannes Scharf). Hence it is not surprising that in 1756 Kant uses it in the same meaning and also speaks of the "transcendental philosophy of the ancients". See K. Bärthlein, "Von der Transzendentalphilosophie der Alten zu der Kants", in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 58(1976)353-392. Cf. also Norbert Hinske, *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie*, Stuttgart 1970, 57.

A century later Plato intimates that being has properties: he calls it one and in his dialogue the *Parmenides* he indicates that unity is the most profound property of being. The reason for this position probably is that to be 'one'is most indeterminate; it has the nature of a principle. In his *Symposium* 211a he speaks of the Beautiful itself as the highest reality and thus he states implicitly that being is beautiful. In the *Republic* the Good is called the most shining of beings[3]. A further fact is also emphasized by Plato: in the *Sophistes* the 'greatest genera' are introduced, that is terms which can be predicated of all things. To this group belong identity and difference, movement and rest. Plotinus voiced his surprise that Plato did not mention unity here[4]. This theory of the "greatest concepts' is a major step on the road to the doctrine of the transcendentals, because it asserts the existence of properties attributable to all things. By 'rest'and 'movement' the determinate nature and knowability of being are probably meant, i.e. what Thomist metaphysics calls the truth of being[5]. However, Plato did not go so far as to assert that all beings are one and good. Speusippus, who succeeded him as head of the Academy, even excluded the good from some levels in the hierarchy of being. On the other hand, Plato repeatedly associates being and truth[6].

When we turn now to Aristotle a first observation we must make is that he strongly denies that 'being' and 'one' are a particular class of beings. In this way he implicitly confirms their nature as transcendental concepts[7]. Moreover, in *Metaph.* 1004 b 5 he calls unity a property *per se* of being. Furthermore, it may be concluded from the introduction to the *De partibus animalium* that every being, however unsightly it may appear to be, is nonetheless accessible to knowledge and full of meaning. However, no developed doctrine of transcendental concepts is found in Aristotle, although it would be incorrect to hold that he denies the transcendental properties of being[8].

Neoplatonism played an important role in the development of the

[3] 518c; 532c.

[4] *Enn.* VII 2, 9.

[5] See E. De Strycker, "Notes sur les relations entre la problématique du *Sophiste* de Platon et celle de la *Métaphysique* d'Aristote", in *Actes du VI.Symposium Aristotelicum. Etudes sur la* Métaphysique *d'Aristote*, Paris 1979, 49-64,p.58.

[6] *Rep.* 501d; 508d; 525c.

[7] *Metaph.* 998 b 22.

[8] K. Bärthlein tried to defend this position, but see H. Seidl, "Die aristotelischen Quellen zur Transzendentalien-Aufstellung bei Thomas von Aquin", in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 80 (1973). Seidl points out that Aristotle compares being with "the same"(*Metaph.* 1954 b 18-25).

doctrine of transcendental concepts. Plotinus'philosophy is a philosophy of transcendental reality. The supreme principle, the One, in its transcendence[9] is all things and no one of them. It is a unity untouched by the multiple; we must not assert anything of it[10]. From the One flows forth the Second Hypostasis, the Intellect. Throughout the *Enneads* several properties are predicated of it: it is unchangeable, eternal, complete and full of life. The Intellectual Principle is truth: it knows the forms as they are in themselves and it is identical with with Being and Actuality[11].

Plotinus did not bring together goodness, wisdom and beauty in a triad as Proclus does[12], although he placed a triad in the Second Principle, viz. Being, Life and Intelligence[13]. In the Christian Neoplatonism of Dionysius unity, beauty and goodness are attributed to God. It would seem that the treatise of the transcendental properties of being has its origin in these theological considerations rather than in the scattered remarks of the Greek philosophers.

The theory of the transcendentals in the Middle Ages

In the works of the great Arab metaphysician Avicenna we do not find a special treatise of the transcendental concepts but Avicenna does treat of the attributes of the Necessary Being: it is one (not composed), unique; it is truth and pure goodness[14]. Avicenna mentions the transcendentals, which he calls "accompanying conditions" (*conditiones concomitantes*) added from the outside to being, much in the way in which according to the Platonists forms are added to an already present form.

Paradoxically these attributes do not belong essentially to being itself: things are not one, good or true by themselves. But Avicenna did place 'thing'(*res*) and 'something' among the properties of being. Averroes rejected Avicenna's theory that the transcendentals add something to being. Faithful to Aristotle he argues that unity signifies the same thing as being but in a different way. However, he does not say that

[9] In *Enn. VI 7, 39* the verb *hyperbainein* is used to express the transcendence of the One over the Intellect and its thought.

[10] *Enneads* V 5, 4.

[11] V 3.

[12] *Platonic Theology* I 25.

[13] See R.T. Wallies, *Neoplatonism*, London 1972, 106.

[14] For some texts see A. Badawi, *Histoire de la philosophie en Islam*, II, Paris 1972, 634ff.

truth and goodness are transcendental properties. One of the first to do so in the Latin West is Roland of Cremona who lists the following transcendental concepts: being, unity, something, thing[15].

The first systematic treatise on transcendental concepts is believed to be the *Summa de bono* by Philip, the Chancellor of the University of Paris (about 1230). The author wanted to fight the pessimism of the Albigenses and to shed light upon goodness. Borrowing this expression from Avicenna he writes that three conditions accompany being. He explains the fact that being has three conditions by a reference to the three causes which work together in the same thing, sc. the efficient, formal and final causes. The material cause is excluded. Since every essence is characterized by the three *rationes* of these causes, it has three conditions which accompany its being inasmuch as it is derived from the First Being. Each being receives its unity from the First Cause, its truth from God as the exemplary cause and its goodness from God as the final cause. Being and its properties are the most universal notions. The three transcendental properties are identical with being, although they differ in conceptual content. For instance, goodness adds to being the notion that it is not separated from its end[16].

The Second Question of the treatise is devoted to the comparison of goodness with truth. Philip quotes the unknown work *Liber de vero et bono* (which he attributes to Augustine): goodness and truth are convertible in the subject of which they are predicated. Nevertheless both terms differ, for true is opposed to false, good to evil. He sees an agreement between the two principles "truth manifests being" and "the good communicates itself". Like William of Auxerre on whom he may depend, he posits the priority of the true with regard to the good ("verum naturaliter prius est quam bonum")[17]. Although Philip borrowed much from Avicenna, he transformed the latter's theory by placing the transcendentals within being itself.

Shortly after Philip had written his treatise Alexander of Hales discussed the transcendental concepts in his *Summa theologica*[18]. The three questions in this treatise deal successively with unity, truth and

[15] Paris Mazarine, Codex 795, f.7 vb., quoted after Dom H. Pouillon, "Le premier Traité des Propriétés transcendantales: La "Summa de bono" du Chancelier Philippe", in *Revue néoscolastique de philosophie* 42(1939)41-77.

[16] This negative description of unity, goodness and truth was important to Philip because he believed it to secure their universality (*o.c.*, q.3:"...universalius dictum est per privationem").

[17] For further details see the study by Dom Pouillon quoted in the previous note. —One should note that the Medievals mostly have the term "transcendens, conceptus transcendentes", while Suarez and later authors use "transcendentalis".

[18] Part I, inq.1, tract.1

goodness. The real issue is the unity, truth and goodness of God. After considering the essence of each (the *quid sit*), Alexander presents a division of these terms, considers the different ways in which they are realized and how they are attributed to God.–The definition of unity is that of Aristotle: one is to be undivided in itself but divided from others. He raises a difficulty: "division" is not a first concept as it should be when used to define the transcendentals. Alexander explains this very neatly by saying that being and one, true, good, are the first concepts to enter the mind. There are no other concepts prior to them by means of which they could be made clear. Any clarification is to be done with the help of later concepts[19].

In chapter two of this First Question the author argues that unity, truth and goodness determine being (*ens*) according as the being (*esse*) of things is considered in its own genus as well as inasmuch as it is related to God's causality and to the soul which is an image of God. Considered on itself being is one, for it is undivided in itself and distinguished from other things. When a being is distinguished from others it is true, for "true" is that by which things can be discerned and known. When a being agrees with the appetite of others it is good.

This text is important insofar as it intends to give an argued explanation of the transcendentals. However, it leaves the transcendentals insufficiently clarified, in particular concerning their relation to the human intellect and will. Rather Alexander derives these concepts from their relation to God. Likewise it does not become clear how they determine the concept of being. God is a cause in a threefold way, as we have seen. Accordingly created things which flow forth from him receive a threefold impression, by which they become adapted to the cause: by unity they are adapted to God as the efficient cause, by truth to God as the exemplary cause and by goodness to him as the final cause.

The text adds that the being of things is ordered in a threefold way to the soul: insofar as things are placed in the memory they are perceived by the intellect and loved by the will. In the last part of this chapter[20] a difficulty is solved. It is objected that since they determine being the transcendentals "narrow it down" (*coarctabit*). The answer is that this applies only to the way we conceive it, but not to what being stands for. The text also says that unity, truth and goodness "surround", involve and imply one another: unity and truth are desired because they are good, and

[19] One should notice that St. Thomas does not say that true and good are absolutely first concepts.

[20] *Summa theologica* I, p.115b.

unity and goodness are desired inasmuch as they are true. As regards the order of the transcendentals being is more absolute than unity, unity than truth and truth than goodness, because truth considers being without regard for its usefulness for us.

The Second Question of the treatise considers truth. The author first raises the question as to whether truth exists. The answer is affirmative: because the intellect knows truth, truth does exist. Besides truth in the intellect there is also the truth of things, for their essence is known by their truth[21]. —Does truth differ from unity and goodness? Yes, because unity adds indivision to being (*ens*), and truth the indivision of being (*esse*) and that what is. In other words, "true' means that a particular thing is in such or such a way.–'Good' adds indivision with regard to being perfect. Hence 'good' is the state in which potency and act are not divided[22].

In chapter three of this Second Question the author reviews several definitions of truth: St. Augustine defines truth as that what is[23].–The definition, "truth is the adequation of the thing and the intellect" is attributed to a "certain" philosopher[24]. A following definition says that truth is the undividedness of being (*esse*) and that which is. The editors refer to Avicenna, *Metaphysica*, tract 8, ch. 6.—St. Augustine is quoted as the author of the definition "truth is that by which that what is, is shown" and "truth is the greatest similitude with the principle". Finally St. Anselm's definition is quoted: "truth is a rectitude which is only perceived by the mind".

The last definition is universal and applies to both God and created things. Alexander explains rectitude as meaning the order by which things are and do what they should be or do. But somewhat further on he explains rectitude as the intelligible light by which whatever is true is measured.– Alexander next asks in which things truth can be found and which are the properties of truth.

The Third Question deals with the goodness of God. Alexander first considers whether goodness and being are the same. In real things 'good' accompanies being but in conceptual content it is different. There is a dual goodness, scil. a basic natural goodness and its usefulness and

[21] *O.c.*, 139.

[22] The editors of the *Summa* (p. 140a) refer to Philip Grovius (who wrote before 1220) for this definition of the good: "Alia definitio boni extrahitur ab Aristotele et aliis philosophis: "Bonum est habens indivisionem actus a potentia simpliciter vel quodam modo".

[23] *Soliloquia* II, ch.5, 8.

[24] St. Albert the Great says that it is commonly used. The definition has a basis in Plato and in Aristotle. The words "aequare rem ad intellectum" are found in the *Destructio destructionum*, disp.1, dubium 22 of Averroes.

order. 'Good' adds to "to be desired" to being. After a reference to beauty the author presents an explanation of goodness by means of three causes: from the point of view of the final cause good is what is desired by all; at the level of the efficient cause good is what communicates itself; at the level of formal causality good is the undividedness of act and potency.

To sum up we may say that Alexander mentions most of the points Aquinas will discuss; he is well informed and collects a great deal of material. However, his explanations are often artificial and he does not keep in mind what we would call the heart of the matter. He uses several principles for distinguishing between the transcendentals: the different genera of causality as well as the different faculties of man. He does not separate sufficiently the order of nature from that of supernatural faith. Although his treatise is still a far cry from that of Aquinas, Alexander of Hales witnesses to the elaborate discussions on the question at the university of Paris in the years prior to St. Thomas[25].

St. Albert the Great carried the discussion of the transcendentals further. A first observation concerns his use of the term "transcendent" in a specific sense, viz. as denoting those predicates which transcend the genera (the predicaments): such are thing, unity, something[26]. He also speaks of being, unity etc. as the "transcendents"[27]. His treatise *De bono* (dating from about 1240) probably reflects certain disputed questions at the university of Paris. Albert's analyses are more subtle than those of Alexander. He presents and explains three definitions of the good: (a) Aristotle's is: that which all things desire; (b) Avicenna calls the good the undividedness of act and potency; (c) Algazel describes good as a fulfilment (actus), the apprehension of which is accompanied by pleasure. Aristotle's definition ("that which all things desire") must be understood of the natural desire (*appetitus naturalis*) of things which is nothing else but the inclination and aptitude of that which is in potency to its perfection. Now such a desire is found in all things. Albert notes that the concept of being is most simple; it cannot be reduced to something prior to it.

Comparing goodness to being Albert proposes a number of arguments in favour of their convertibility[28]. Being is what is first in any thing, goodness comes second. Goodness can be resolved into the concept of being as directed to an end. But if one considers goodness in the First

[25] See J. Fuchs, *Die Proprietäten des Seins bei Alexander von Hales*, München 1930.

[26] *Opera I: Liber de praedicabilibus* IV, c.3.

[27] *Metaph.* I, tr.1, c.2.

[28] *O.c.*, q.1, a.6.

Cause and being in created things, being is posterior to the good. However, in the things of which both are predicated, the terms are convertible. There is nothing which is not good, at least in an imperfect way.

Article seven examines more in detail whether everything which is, is good in as far as it is. If so, there is a difficulty: are things good by participation or substantially? If by participation, they are not good through themselves. But the second alternative cannot be defended either. Albert does not admit Boethius'solution of the problem[29]. He suggests that every created good flows forth from the First Good, inasmuch as this is the efficient cause which intends to make a certain thing. This means that the being of created things is never detached from goodness. Nevertheless to be and to be good are not the same, because being depends on the efficient cause and goodness on the final cause which moves the efficient. Goodness does not add a positive reality to being but a new signification: in the subject in which it is, it is the same; in its conceptual contents it differs from being.

In Albert's Commentary on the *De divinis nominibus* of Dionysius a similar doctrine is proposed: 'true'and 'good' add a certain mode to being. "True" says a relation to the idea (of a thing) inasmuch as this is the principle of knowledge, while 'good' adds a relation to the end. Surprisingly Albert writes that in this way both predicates add a certain "nature'(sc. a positive content) to being; hence they are not convertible with 'being' as to their content. Some other predicates are convertible with one another according to the subject (in which they are) and according to their nature (positive content), but not according to their mode. Such are being and unity. Unity does add a certain mode (undividedness) to being[30]. However, somewhat further in the same text he writes that nothing can be added to being as if it were a different content (*quasi altera natura ab ipso*), but that these predicates may have a different way of signifying, according as they to a greater or lesser extent[31] determine being. Albert is aware on the novelty of the treatise on the transcendentals, for he writes that Aristotle does not say that truth and goodness are properties which accompany every being[32].

[29] In the latter's *De hebdomadibus*.

[30] *Super Dionysii De divinis nominibus*, q.5 (*Opera omnia*, 28, 1), 314, 20.

[31] On this section see H. Kühle, "Die Lehre Alberts des Grossen von den Transzendentalien", in F.-J. Von Rintelen (Hrsg), *Abhandlungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, I: Die Philosophia Perennis*, Regensburg 1930, 131 - 147.

[32] *In I Sent.*, d.46, N, a 14: Borgnet, t. 26, 450.

Thomas Aquinas on the transcendentals

Albert's disciple, St. Thomas Aquinas, in a text unequalled at any time in clarity and depth, gives a systematic explanation of the transcendental concepts. It is found in the very early *Disputed Questions on Truth*, q.1. a.1. The systematic survey is intended to provide the background for Aquinas's treatment of truth. We give a translation of the passage relevant to our subject:

"That which the intellect conceives first as most known and in which all concepts are resolved is being (*ens*), as Avicenna says in the beginning of his *Metaphysics*. Therefore all other concepts of the intellect are formed because of an addition to being. But one cannot add anything to being as a content foreign to it, in the way a specific difference is added to the genus or an accident to the subject, because every content is essentially being; therefore, even the Philosopher shows in the Third Book of the *Metaphysics* that being cannot be a genus. But in this way one can say that some things add to being to the extent that they express a mode (*modus*) of it which is not expressed by the term being itself. This can occur in a twofold manner: in one way so that the mode expressed is some particular mode of being. For there are various degrees of being according to which the different modes of being are thought and according to these modes we obtain the different genera of things. For substance does not add a difference to being which signifies some content added to being, but by the term substance a special way of being is expressed, scil. being *per se*; the same holds for the other genera.

This occurs in a different way when the mode expressed is consequent upon every being. Now this mode can be taken in a twofold way, namely in one way as consequent upon every being considered in itself; in another way, inasmuch as it is consequent upon every being considered as ordered to another.

If in the first way, it is said because it expresses something in being in an affirmative or in a negative manner. But nothing is said affirmatively and predicated absolutely that can be conceived in every being except its essence according to which it is said to be. And thus this name thing (*res*) is given. It differs from being in that being is taken from the act of being, whereas the name thing expresses the what-it-is or the essence of being.

The negation which follows upon all being in an absolute manner is the absence of division. This is expressed by the name one, for one is nothing else than undivided being.

If, on the other hand, a mode of being is taken in the second manner, scil. according to the order of one to another, this can be in a twofold way. In one way according to the division of the one from the other. This is expressed by the term something (*aliquid*). For a thing is called something as if it were some other thing. Hence just as being is called one inasmuch as it is undivided in itself, so it is called something as it is divided from others.

In another way (this occurs) according to the agreement of one being with another. Now this is not possible except when we have something which by its nature is such as to agree with all being. This is the soul which in a certain sense is everything as is said in the Third Book of the *De anima*. In the soul there is indeed the faculty of thinking and the faculty of striving. The agreement of being with the faculty of striving is expressed by the term 'good'; the agreement of being with the intellect is expressed by the term 'true'.

This important text is not without its difficulties. What strikes us in the first place is that the transcendentals are not derived by connecting them with God's properties nor are they related to the triple causality of God with regard to created things. St. Thomas also rejects the appropriation of unity, truth and goodness to the three Divine Persons: these transcendentals, he writes, signify the same thing under different aspects, whereas the Divine Persons are really distinct; on the other hand, the Divine Persons are not realities distinct from divine being; therefore, the three transcendentals belong to each Person[33]. Finally Aquinas observes (opposing himself to the temptation of the Platonists to substantify forms) that the three concepts and that of being are more unified in God than in creatures, although even in creatures they are not separate in being (as are wisdom and power).

The text is a piece of speculative thinking about the way and order in which some of our first ideas are formed. However, it would be wrong to call it a logical text because it does not deal with the so-called second intentions (such as genus, species, etc. which belong to the domain of logic) but with the properties of being and the wealth of its content. In unfolding this content St. Thomas first considers being in itself, next being as related to other beings and the human mind. Although this relation of being to the intellect and the will had been intimated by Albert

[33] *De veritate*, q.1, a.1 ad 5. The text was misunderstood by C. Prantl in his *Geschichte der Logik im Abendlande*, III 114, n.515 and by Knittermeyer, *o.c.*, 44.

the Great, it is now for the first time explicitly worked out. As we shall see later, the order of being to the human mind is of paramount importance in the metaphysics of Aquinas: things are of such a nature as to agree with the human mind; the mind is such as to be ordered to things; things are not opaque, meaningless, neutral, evil or fiendish, but rich in content, open, good and friendly.

In his deduction Aquinas uses the distinction between 'adding something from the outside' and 'rendering more explicit what is already contained in being'. As regards being, only the second way of 'adding' applies. It is twofold: restricting being to a particular class of being (such as one of the categories) or by adding a mode of being which is consequent universally on being. In this second way one obtains the transcendental concepts.

Aquinas places such properties as 'thing' and 'something' in the context of the metaphysics of being. As has been shown in chapter one the term 'being'(*ens*) denotes the being-real of a thing. It is taken from the act of being, whereas 'thing' signifies the essential content which is made real by the act of being. 'Being divided from other things' as a transcendental property of being means that it is not the human mind which distinguishes things from one another but the fact that one thing is not another thing. This is expressed by the principle of contradiction.

In all its simplicity this derivation has the convincing force of evidence. It delves into what one might call the unconscious part of our intellectual activity. The first transcendental concepts are formed at a very early stage of intellectual activity before one has the support of language to enable the intellect to reflect on what it is doing and before one has the means to retain this knowledge consciously. The passage of the *De veritate* presupposes that the intellect first conceives the most general and simple things before coming to a more detailed knowledge of all the classes of being. Since the transcendentals reveal the properties of being and therefore of all beings, the study of them belongs to metaphysics.

In connection with the text of the *De veritate* the difficulty has been raised that this derivation of five transcendentals is unique: elsewhere Aquinas mainly speaks of unity, truth and goodness and seems to forget "thing' and 'something'. For this reason, it is argued, one should only acknowledge unity, truth and goodness as *authentic* transcendentals. An additional argument would be that this text is not even intended as a treatise on the transcendentals, but conceived as an introduction to a definition of truth. Moreover, the opponents argue that the literary genus

of the *quaestio disputata* could not be used to give a definite doctrinal determination, but should be an expository and persuasive handling of a particular subject[34]. But these flippant assertions are refuted by the very fact that Aquinas frequently gives determinations of particular doctrines in his disputed questions. The fact that our passage is an introduction to the study of truth does not diminish its doctrinal value with regard to the question of the transcendentals. The scientific method followed by St. Thomas obliges him to treat the common before dealing with particular instances; for this reason the study of truth is preceded by a consideration of the transcendental concepts as such. The significance of the passus will become even more evident in the following chapters.

[34] This is the opinion of Mark D. Jordan, "The Grammar of *esse* : re-reading Thomas on the transcendentals", in *The Thomist* 1980, 1-26.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROPERTIES OF BEING, II

The Theory of the Transcendental Concepts from Scotus to Sartre

While St. Thomas Aquinas proposed a purely metaphysical derivation of the properties of being, Scotus places them in a more theological setting[1]. An adequate treatment of the transcendentals in Scotus would require the previous study of his entire metaphysical systeem. This is not possible here, so that our exposé will remain sketchy. Scotus' theory of the univocity of being was discussed in the first chapter.

Scotus' theory of the transcendentals

A key text of Scotus on the transcendentals in general is *Ordinatio* I, d.8, q.3, n.18-19[2]. To Scotus whatever predicates belong to being as such before it is divided into finite and infinite being (and also into the ten categories) are transcendent. Scotus uses the term 'transcendent'in a broader sense than that of properties of being and predicates convertible with it. 'Prior'and 'posterior', 'act'and 'potency' belong to this group. Because God, the infinite being, is not divided into categories, he is called a transcendent also[3]. As O. Boulnois points out, this extension of the use of the term transcendental implies that for Scotus the transcendentals are no longer 'entia rationis' (things of reason which as such do not exist in reality). To him they are first, not secondary intentions and express as many formal essences[4]. In the text of the *Ordinatio* mentioned above Scotus adds that transcendental is whatever is not contained under any genus (except being). "Hence not to have any predicate above it except being pertains to the very notion of a transcendental. That it be common to many is purely incidental". "It is not necessary that a transcendental be predicated of every being, unless it is coextensive with the first of the

[1] Thus he applies unity, truth and goodness to the three Divine Persons (*Ordin.*, d.3, q.5).

[2] See Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M., *The Transcendentals and their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus*, St. Bonaventure N.Y. 1946. We follow Prof. Wolter's account of Scotus' view.

[3] *Rep.* I, d.8,q.5,n.13:"quidquid dicitur de Deo est formaliter transcendens".

[4] *Jean Duns Scot. Sur la connaissance de Dieu et l'univocité de l'étant.* Introduction, traduction et commentaire, Paris 1988, p.57, n.143.

transcendentals, namely being". "Essential is that it escapes from categorial classification"[5].

The highest class of transcendentals after unity, truth and goodness are act and potency, the necessary and the contingent.

As we have observed in chapter one, Scotus considers being and the transcendentals as univocals. This means that unity, truth or goodness in whatever being they are found have the same formal content. Within the same thing being, unity and goodness are formally distinct, although they are really one by way of union. "In every physical entity or *res* the perfections expressed by the concepts being, one, true and good are all *unitive contenta* (contained in unity) in one real indivisible whole"[6]. As Wolter points out, in assuming this distinction Scotus intended to get an objective basis for the fact that we have distinct concepts[7]. However, what Scotus actually does is to project the way we think these concepts back into reality. It is hard to see how there are in a thing itself formal, but no real distinctions between being and its transcendental properties. This difficulty is perhaps overcome when one holds with Wolter that this formal distinction must be seen as that of an objective intelligible content which represents part of physical reality[8]. But in this way one transforms Scotus' formal distinction into a distinction of reason with has a basis in the ontological contents of being, although there are no really different forms in it.

The upshot of the above is that according to Scotus unity, truth or goodness are not formally being. The transcendentals are different from being because of their real formal contents (*ratione reali*)[9]. This position leads to a substantification of the transcendentals and ultimately it initiates a way of thinking which deprives being itself of its unity, truth and goodness.

Scotus does not discuss other properties besides the three mentioned above and does not distinguish between 'being', 'thing' (*res*) and 'something' (*aliquid*).

Passing now to a survey of Scotus' view of the three transcendentals we must note that Scotus not appears to admit a real distinction but only a modal one between numerical unity and transcendental unity[10]. The most perfect unity is that of the individual. Whatever exists is numerically one. In God this numerical unity is a characteristic of the divine nature it coincides with, but in creatures we must distinguish between two formalities (nature as common to several individuals and the this-ness (*haecceitas*) of each. This this-ness is an entity and is added to being. Scotus has a rather strong view of the specific unity of things belonging to one species so that he has been accused of making the universal (the species) exist in reality. Scotists reply to this that the existing common nature is different in each individual being[11].

[5] Wolter, *o.c.*, p. 9.
[6] *Ordin.* II, d.16, q.un.,n.17: Wolter, p.101.
[7] *O.c.*, 28.
[8] *L.c.*, 30.
[9] *Ordin.* I, d.3, q.3.
[10] *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum*, IV q.2, n.18.

With regard to truth Scotus holds that every being has the inherent aptitude to manifest itself to an intellect. True is what is known to the intellect. For Scotus the truth of being does not have the same importance it has for Aquinas, for he does not use the term in the sense of a conformity to a divine exemplar. The reason is that this relation of things to the divine ideas is totally different from that of God's essence to God's intellect. Thus the term cannot be considered to be a univocal. Hence Scotus does not speak about it[12].

Goodness is a convertible attribute of being, formally distinct from being as well as from unity and truth. Nevertheless in physical things it is identical with them. "When divorced of all that accrues to it by way of attribution, the notion of transcendental goodness as a universal property of being loses much of its significance, particularly when understood in its original Platonic meaning. It is not surprising, then, to find in Scotus little more than a passing mention of this attribute"[13]. For Scotus ontological goodness is not so much appetibility as the actualization of a perfection. God is good because he is the fullness of actuality. Indeed, Scotus declares that good and perfect are the same: every being is good since it has its perfection. As such it has no evil opposed to it, since evil is essentially a privation; therefore, it must exist in something else[14].

Scotus' theory of the transcendentals offers a wealth of insights. Apart from the difficulties caused by his formal distinction, the doctrine of the univocity of being itself and of its transcendental properties had a great impact on later philosophers. Scotus' system tends to cut being loose from its properties. Moreover, in particular with regard to goodness, Scotus no longer upholds that things are ordered to the human mind, as

[11] Wolter, p. 111. On unity see *Ord.* I, d.23, q.un.,n.2.
[12] See Wolter, p.118. Cf. *Metaph.* VI, q.3.
[13] Wolter, p.119.
[14] *Report. par.*, II, d.34, n.3.

the mind is ordered also to them. Later developments of the theory of the transcendentals were to pursue this direction.

Two important disciples of Scotus, Antonius Andreas and Franciscus Mayron, defended his theory of the transcendentals. Thomists, on the other hand, followed Aquinas in their explanation of the properties of being: the five terms express being and are consequent on it; they are only different from being itself in our thought.

Much in the line of Scotus Ockham argues that being and its property 'unity' are not the same with regard to their real contents, although both terms stand for the same thing (*supponunt pro eodem*). Being and unity are not really identical: their concepts are different and the one is not the other[15]. In this way the theory of the transcendentals is reduced to a study of certain concepts which are connected with all other concepts, regardless of whether they denote something real or not. The transcendentals present a structure in which we must think reality, but do not necessarily refer to what is real itself.

As A. Louth observes, in the later Middle Ages a dissociation of thought from physical reality as perceived by man, that is, from its goodness and beauty did set in which was to lead to the disappearance of the metaphysics of being and of philosophical theology[16]. This change was accompanied by a growing attention for the individual, his perception of reality and his rights. Truth, goodness and beauty came to be seen as subjective viewpoints ascribed to things rather than as the properties of all beings.

As has been intimated above, Ockham tends to consider the transcendentals as signs or symbols which are widest in signification and can stand for all things. In Lorenzo Valla's work *Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie*[17] one can find an interesting development of this line of thinking. Valla believes that there can only be one supreme transcendental concept and reduces unity to being: every being must be denoted as a unity. He calls this combination of both 'thing'(*res*)[18]. But in doing so Valla no longer distinguishes between what is real and not or between the intra-mental and the extra-mental. However, at about the same time

[15] *Summa totius logicae*, c. 37.

[16] A. Louth, *Discerning the Mystery. An Essay on the Nature of Theology*, Oxford 1983.

[17] Edit. G. Zippel, 2 vls, Padova 1982.

[18] *O.c.* I 2 (vol.I,p. 15, 11f.): "Quare ut finem questionis faciamus...nulla sit amplius de regno controversia, sed cetera quinque: 'aliquid', 'ens', 'unum', 'verum', 'bonum'...descendant ...et 'res' quod est ex sex vere rex, prona adorent, ut quique Perse Darium, quem regem esse intellexerant, adoraverunt". Quoted after E. Keßler, "Die Transformation des aristotelischen Organon durch Lorenzo Vall", in E. Keßler, H. Lohr and W. Sparn (edit.), *Aristotelismus und Renaissance. Wolfenbütteler Forschungen*, vol. 4, Wiesbaden 1988, p.237.

the professional philosopher Petrus Fonseca followed Aquinas' doctrine of the transcendentals which he defended against Scotus, although he avows that he does not see a clear distinction between *ens*, *aliquid* and *res*[19].

Suarez on the properties of being

Suarez defends the realist position against Scotus' view that nothing can be real which is not intrinsically and essentially a real being. There are three ways, Suarez writes, in which the properties of being are related to it:

(a) Scotus says that these properties are real and by their nature different from being, although they are not intrinsically and essentially being;

(b) Being has real properties which formally differ from being itself. Thus they signify a mode outside being, although they are said to include being formally (viz. inasmuch as being is determined to precisely this mode which is this or that property).

(c) According to the doctrine of St. Thomas being has no real and positive properties added to it; the properties add only a negation or a relation of reason. Being itself is one, true and good.

Suarez explains that the distinction in thought (which does not obtain in reality), such as that between being and its unity, results from our imperfect way of conceiving things. Being cannot have properties, which are in reality distinct from it, for whatever is, is a being[20]. However, these attributes are not products of reason alone, because they really belong to being, regardless of the fact whether man considers them.

On the other hand, apparently contradicting what he said before, Suarez argues that these passions or properties of being do not signify formally beings of reason (*entia rationis*)[21]. He probably wants to say that they are not merely a product of reason. John of St. Thomas says more correctly that the transcendentals have a foundation in being. They add a negation or a relation to being but express something positive in it.

In the second section of his Third Disputation Suarez examines how many transcendentals there are. He excludes 'thing' and 'something' from them. The reason is that 'being' and 'thing' are synomymous and

[19] *Comment. in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, Frankfurt 1599, I 762ff.

[20] *Disputat. metaph* . III, 1, 8.

[21] *L.c.*, n.10.

'thing' is never said of being[22]. It is true that Aquinas makes a distinction between the two terms but in this case 'thing' does not mean a passion of being but is a quidditative predicate. With regard to 'something' Suarez is inclined to think that it is included in unity, viz. in its sense of 'a different thing'. Thus he leaves us with three transcendental properties of being, of which unity comes first because it belongs to being in an absolute way; truth and goodness come second and third, goodness having its foundation in truth[23]. Subsequently Suarez submits some subtle explanations of the precise meaning of these transcendentals.

Finally, Suarez also comments on Scotus' view that the so-called disjunctive passions of being are also transcendentals (necessary and contingent, actual and potential). As this text makes clear, Suarez' perspective of being is no longer "that which exists". However, correcting Scotus he prefers to call these disjunctive passions divisions of being,—divisions he could use to organize his own treatise[24].

The theory of the transcendentals after Suarez

Our next witness to the history of the theory of the transcendentals is Giordano Bruno (1548-1600). In his *De la causa, principio et uno* Bruno mentions as transcendentals being, unity, thing and something. Unity, truth and goodness are Pythagorean concepts, he says, with unity being most powerful and occupying the centre. Nothing is above truth, nothing can be better than goodness. The truth in things is derived from their unity.

At about the same time Clemens Timpler considers whatever is intelligible the subject matter of metaphysics[25]. But he does not study the transcendentals[26].—His contemporary R. Goclenius did not even consider the transcendentals important enough to mention them in his famous *Lexicon philosophicum*. Keckermann, on the other hand, returns to a more scholastic approach: unity, truth and goodness are modes of being (the scholastic 'aliquid' is absorbed into unity, being is identified with 'res'). Truth is the mode by which being agrees with the divine mind

[22] Here, as in so many other questions, Suarez was probably influenced by Scotus, who also abandoned these transcendentals. Scotus' metaphysics is that of the *existibile*; in his essentialism Suarez appears to take over this position and holds that quiddity (*res*) is the name which expresses being most properly.

[23] *L.c.*, 8-9.

[24] See J.-F. Courtine, *Suarez et le sujet de la métaphysique*, Paris 1990, p.394ff.

[25] *Metaphysicae Systema methodicum*, 1604.

[26] See H. Knittermeyer, *Der Terminus transzendental in seiner historischen Entwicklung bis zu Kant*, Marburg 1920, 118f.

and by goodness it agrees with God's will. His treatment of the transcendentals shows traces of a theological approach[27].

The doctrine of the transcendental properties of being is a fundamental part of the metaphysics of Aquinas: being is not split up, not chaotic, obscure or threatening, but is one, meaningful, knowable and good; it is related to the human mind. As we have seen, this positive view became blurred in the fourteenth century, but even more so in the period of history we are now dealing with. Descartes hardly uses the term transcendental and gives it the sense of eminent. By his *cogito* which introduces a real break between man and physical reality, he prepares the way for modern subjectivism. On the horizon of Western man an attitude of dominating nature emerges. It becomes his aim to rearrange the world on the basis of his knowledge.

In his *De augmentu scientiarum* Francis Bacon rejects the traditional view of the transcendental concepts. Questions about God, truth and goodness belong to theology.—Thomas Hobbes pours ridicule on the doctrine of the properties of being. The definition of unity as the indivision of being is senseless, because one concludes that what is undivided is undivided[28]. Who does not know that man and one man, man and truly man have the same meaning? Truth or verity is not an affection of the thing but of the propositions concerning it.

In his *Cogitata metaphysica* Spinoza devotes a chapter to the question of the transcendentals. He acknowledges that all metaphysicians[29] assert that being is one, true and good, although practically no one really reflects on these attributes. Spinoza believes that these determinations are only ways of thinking which do not add anything to being. It is meaningless to speak of truth as a transcendental determination of being. Clarity is the criterion of truth. Likewise 'good' is not an absolute attribute, but is used with respect to certain things. A being can be good and bad at the same time, according to the things with which it is in contact. Spinoza believes that the origin of these terms lies in the fact that the human mind cannot retain at the same time the different representations. These representations become confused and the mind now forms general representations such as essence and thing.

Knittermeyer suggests that Spinoza is not too far removed from St.

[27] *Metaphysicae Brevissima synopsis et compendium*, I 2013ff. See Knittermann, *o.c.*, 124.

[28] *Logica* 3, 7.

[29] He may mean Suarez, Combachius, Burgersdijck and other authors of his time. See *o.c.*, I ch.6.

Thomas's view when he calls the transcendentals *modi cogitandi* (modes of thought)[30] but he overlooks the fact that for Spinoza they are only extrinsic denominations"[31]. Spinoza even writes that those who consider 'true' a transcendental term or an affection of being are clearly mistaken because it can be said of things only in an improper way or rhetorically. The same applies to 'good': considered in itself a thing is neither good nor bad. Before creating the world God was not good.

In Germany J.Clauberg mentions the transcendentals (unity, truth and goodness). However, as Knittermeyer writes, truth is reduced to the agreement of a thing with its idea or definition[32]. If something has the essence it must have, it is good. In the last analysis the transcendentals are different ways of thinking about the same thing. The transcendental concepts are very general; therefore, they cannot be considered the end of metaphysical speculation. They lack clarity.—It would seem that two tendencies show in this passage: the transcendentals have lost their importance and are understood as modes in which one may conceive being.

Knittermeyer notes that although Leibniz has a good knowledge of scholastic philosophy, he hardly mentions the transcendental concepts, even in his correspondence[33]. He uses the term transcendental in a mathematical sense in connection with his studies in this field. According to Knittermeyer[34] it was Christian Wolff who destroyed the metaphysics of the transcendentals. Wolff purports to establish a metaphysics ordered toward the sciences. In his *Philosophia rationalis seu ontologia* the transcendentals are relegated to the background. The change in perspective is clearly visible in his treatment of unity which is considered in the context of quantity. Unity is the inseparability of those characteristics by which a being is determined. By virtue of its unity every being is considered an individual thing, Even a universal is one in the manner of a singular being[35]. Wolff does not speak of the relation of being to the will. He replaces ontological goodness with a postulate of regularity and order. Wolff does make some remarks on transcendental truth which he defines as the order in the variety of those things which are together and follow on one another or, if one prefers, as the order of

[30] *O.c.*, 176.
[31] *Cogitata* I, c.6.
[32] *Opera philosophica*, Amsterdam 1691, 308. Knittermeyer, p.171.
[33] *O.c.*, p.177.
[34] *O.c.*, 182.
[35] *O.c.*, I 3, c.4. See § 329.

existing things[36]. Every being is true: given the validity of the principles of contradiction and of sufficient reason, there is sufficient reason for that which exists to be a being[37].

Wolff substitutes perfection for goodness: perfection is the agreement of several things which differ from each other. Each perfection has a general reason why the things of which it is made up are the way they are. For instance, man is perfect when all his activities strive for one end[38]. Wolff believes that his concept of perfection should take the place of the unclear scholastic notion of the good. In a perfect thing the reason is apparent why it has its properties and components. As appears from the above the principles of contradiction and of sufficient reason are considered to be the ultimate basis of truth. Wolff applies his view of truth to the world: because the different parts of the world are mutually connected, need each other and collaborate, there is ontological truth in the world[39].

Kant and the transcendentals

Wolff is one of a group of German metaphysicians such as A.G. Baumgarten, F.C. Baumeister and Christian August Crusius who influenced Kant. All of them are characterized by their confidence in reason and order as well as by their interest in nature. In France the authors of the *Encyclopaedia* made man the centre of the universe and severed the world from its metaphysical connection with God.—With Kant the change which had been prepared by Suarez, Descartes, Wolff and others acquires its definite form: it is no longer being as such which is studied but man's transcendental consciousness which thinks reality according to the mind's own categories. In this way transcendental philosophy is born. Metaphysics becomes a superstructure conceived by the human intellect. Man's reason constitutes its objects which lie beyond it: the ego, the world and God.

In § 12 of the second edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant observes that in scholastic metaphysics it was argued that every *ens* is one, true and good. But considerations of this theme were rather pitiful and did not produce results to speak of, so that in recent years this chapter

[36] *L.c.*, c.6, § 495.
[37] § 498.
[38] § 503; 505.
[39] *Cosmologia generalis*, Frankfurt 1731, 71: "...ut mechanismus mundi sit fons veritatis transcendentalis quae in mundo tamquam ente datur et quae mundum ens verum efficit".

of metaphysics was only kept out of reverence for the past. Thus we should examine the background of this view and which are the misunderstandings that played a role. Kant asserts that these alleged transcendental predicates of things are nothing but logical requirements and criteria for our knowledge. They are not qualifications of objective being[40]. In this way the disfigurement of objective reality set in. Some of Kant's contemporaries noticed the drift of his theory of reality.

In 1796 a certain Dr. Jenisch published a study in reply to a prize-question put forward by the Academy in Berlin on the progress of philosophy since the time of Leibniz and Wolff[41]. Jenisch observes that it is a very depressing thought that our knowledge no longer knows the reality of the world and that nature with all its wonders appears to fall back into nothingness.—Toward the end of Kant's life idealism began to develop. According to Hegel being is indeterminate: the transcendental concepts which we distinguish are the result of a process of becoming but are not intrinsic properties of being as such[42].

Whereas in idealism the attributes of being are merely the product of thought or an exteriorisation of human ways of thinking, Marxism holds the reverse: thought is material being transferred into the human mind[43]. With Lenin and Stalin the reduction of the life of the mind to matter becomes complete. The attributes of matter are movement, extension, becoming in time and a certain infinity[44]. In this way physical attributes of material things replace the transcendentals. Usefulness is the primary value and expels as worthless the properties of being. Just as the idea of God is an illusion which prevents man from devoting himself to his task, so too is the recognition of an already present goodness in being a hindrance to total dedication toward progress: there can no longer be any definite ontological truth, for matter is in a state of constant becoming.

Nietzsche and the devaluation of reality

Nietzsche drew the consequences from the tenets of idealism and spoke of a devaluation of all values. By the term 'nihilism' he understood the radical refusal of values, of the goodness and the meaning of being. The

[40] See also Kant's Letter to Herz, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, X, Berlin 1900, 129 and Bärthlein's already quoted article.

[41] *Über Grund und Wert der Entdeckungen des Herrn Professor Kant in der Metaphysik, Moral und Aesthetik.* —See also F. Holz, *Kant et l'Académie de Berlin*, Frankfurt 1981, 46.

[42] *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, §24.

[43] Cf. K. Marx, *Das Kapital, I 18 (Nachwort zur 1. Auflage).*

[44] See I.M. Bochenski, *Der Sowjetrussische dialektische Materialismus*, Bern 1950, 102.

highest form of nihilism, he writes, is the insight that every conviction, every belief is necessarily wrong since there is no true world[45]. Nietzsche himself understood the extent of the spiritual revolution he was preaching: the shadow of Zarathustra turns to him with the question as to whether there is still an aim for man or a place where he belongs. But the answer is that there are none left[46]. There are no longer any values that are given and which need to be discovered by man. Man must make his own values for himself, and these are never definitive. "The most noble concepts such as that of being, are nothing more than the smoke of a reality that evaporates"[47]. We create a system of values, Nietzsche writes, to make the world comprehensible. The world then appears to us to be logically ordered, but in reality we are the dupes of an illusion[48]. Being itself is partly responsible for this as it displays itself in such a manner that it is deformed. In fact being is never identical with itself[49]. The only thing of which we are certain is change[50].

Philosophers of the twentieth century on the transcendentals

The rise of phenomenology might be thought to have ushered in a return to a more positive evaluation of being. Husserl's motto was, after all, "Back to things". Nonetheless the position of the phenomenologist on this point remains highly ambiguous: for him beings are not things in the Thomist sense of the term. They are that which is given and are relative to consciousness. Reality does not become immanent in the intellect but remains a determination of the field of consciousness. The human subject and his situation co-determine perception: philosophy becomes a growing awareness of our manner of seeing things. Albert Camus expresses this as follows: "Phenomenology refuses to explain the world; it seeks only to be a description of that which is experienced. It ends up by teaching an absurdity to the extent that it holds as its point of departure that there is no truth, but that there are only truths". "What illuminates the thing is consciousness that devotes attention to it. Consciousness places the objects which it deals with in a state of hovering and isolates

[45] *Aus dem Nachlaß der Achtzigerjahre* (Schlechta III), 555.

[46] *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Schlechta II) 511: "Wo ist mein Heim? Darnach frage ich und suche und suchte ich, das fand ich nicht. O ewiges Überall, o ewiges Nirgendwo, o ewiges Umsonst"; "Nichts ist wahr, alles ist erlaubt".

[47] *Götzen-Dämmerung* (Schlechta, II) 958.

[48] *Der Wille zur Macht*, §516 (Schlechta III, 538f.).

[49] *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Schlechta II), 463.

[50] *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §26: Schlechta II, 59.

them; from this moment on they are beyond all judgment. This 'intention' characterizes consciousness. But the term 'intention' conveys no finality at all. In the phenomenological way of seeing things where no single principle of unity appears, thought can still derive joy from describing and understanding every aspect of experience. But the 'truth' which is ascribed to each of these aspects is of a psychological order. It bears witness to the importance reality may have"[51].

Consciousness as it assigns meaning (*das sinngebende Bewußtsein)* is the heart of the phenomenological theory; imagination is a condition for this, as it enables us to consider an essence from various standpoints[52]. It is true that spontaneous perception (*die natürliche Einstellung*) remains the point of departure and the basis for this approach. But the manner in which we consider the content of a given essence (*Abschattung*) is dependent on our situation and previous experience[53]. Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty elaborate on this dependence on our situation.

Sartre describes Husserl's concept of the phenomenological approach as follows: "Knowing is bursting open in some direction, wresting oneself from the moist gastric intimacy in order to get away, outside oneself, to what is not oneself. yonder near the tree and yet outside it, as it withdraws itself from me and I can no more lose myself in it than it can pour itself out in me: outside itself, outside myself"[54]. For Sartre knowing something means to push something aside and to keep it at a distance, freeing oneself from it, in short denying it[55]. What gives meaning to things is consciousness: the essence of things no longer lies in themselves, but depends on man's appraisal and use of them[56]. Things themselves are dark, unruly and hostile; they have no truth, goodness and beauty[57].

In Merleau-Ponty's perspectivism our knowledge of things depends on our embodiment[58]. At the start of the process of knowing the thing is merely a formless magma which takes on a shape under our gaze[59]. If we no longer look at a thing, it fades away and falls back into chaos. Under

[51] *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, 63f.
[52] *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, Den Haag 1950, 163.
[53] *Op.cit.*, 64.
[54] *Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie d'Husserl: l'intentionnalité*, in *Situations*, I 30-35, p.32.
[55] *L'imaginaire*, 233.
[56] *L'être et le néant*, 15.
[57] *L'imaginaire*, 245.
[58] *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 269.
[59] *O.c.*, 276f.

our gaze, however, the thing becomes laden with predicates originating from us[60]. This theory deprives beings of the lustre of their truth and of the attraction of their goodness; they are degraded to a formless mass, which is alien to our intellect.

Karl Jaspers attempted to overcome this doubt in regard to the value of things. In his view every thing can be a cipher, that is it can refer to a transcendence. If I dwell upon a thing, I can be struck by a stream of light coming forth from the depth of being[61]. But every cypher offers a plurality of meanings with the result that this deciphering is a movement without end and results in failure: being flees away from me. Thus Jaspers insinuates that beings have a depth of light and value but that one cannot know them really[62].

Heidegger also proceeds in this direction, but makes a sharper distinction between beings and Being. The latter is the mysterious depth of beings (in no way to be identified with God). Due to the fact that we turn our attention to beings, we forget Being. Heidegger approaches Being from the viewpoint of the latter's manifestation, i.e. of its truth. Being never communicates itself fully: our encounter with it depends on the moment in time at which we are now. Being reveals itself to us, but it also conceals itself. The cleft between the knowing subject and reality which was introduced into Western thought by Descartes, is not removed. In the final analysis man projects truth and goodness on to beings[63]. Man stands as a foreigner in the face of a world which he sees threatened by nothingness. Being does not communicate its truth to man. Hence Heidegger holds that the fundamental question in philosophy is why there is something and not nothing.

In neopositivism tenets such as "every being is true", "every being is good" have no relation to reality but are a tautology[64]. Scientific knowledge accepts only statements dependent on experience. In cases where we ascertain that something is good, we express this. Our respective statements will refer only to individual forms of goodness. However, precisely on this level beings will fequently not be good or meaningful for us. "Meaning" is not inherent in things but is given to them by us[65].

[60] *Ibidem*, 369.
[61] *Von der Wahrheit*, 1045.
[62] *Philosophie*, III 118.
[63] *Vom Wesen des Grundes*. See A. De Waelhens, *La philosophie de Martin Heidegger*[6], Louvain-Paris 1969, 103.
[64] A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*,86(Dover Edition).
[65] K. Popper, "Selbstbefreiung durch Wissen", in L. Reinisch (edit.), *Der Sinn der Geschichte*, München 1967, 100-106.

Supporters of the so-called philosophy of values express a similar view. According to R.B. Perry things themselves have no value but obtain value only when man begins to take interest in them[66]. Gabriel Marcel made some critical remarks on this theory which are worth quoting: "I would accordingly be inclined to make the following undoubtedly paradoxical affirmation that the introduction of the idea of value into philosophy, an idea virtually unknown to the great metaphysicians of the past, is as it were the sign of a fundamental devaluation of reality itself... It is true that we may think here of a certain compensation which, incidentally, remains imaginary, which seeks in an ideal manner, i.e. basically in the imagination, to find again that which on the level of reality one has a tendency to do away with"[67].

It is precisely the purpose of the doctrine of the transcendental attributes to show that beings are not obscure, indifferent or absurd but have their own meaning and are prepared to communicate themselves to us. When man makes himself accessible to being and its message, both in natural prephilosophical experience as well as in scientific-philosophical knowledge, he will discover no absurdity or hostility but objective values, namely knowability and meaning, goodness and lustre or beauty. Precisely these attributes constitute the metaphysical food of man.

Undoubtedly we can at times improve the quality of things and make them useful to ourselves. We can think out fresh applications and thus, in a sense, create values. However, all of this only takes place on a subordinate level and presupposes as the basic fact the riches of beings. If we see only the aspect of their usefulness, we lose the sense of being and become people for whom "the perceptible no longer has anything attractive... (and who) move among things which mean nothing to them..., (who) make themselves a world according to their fancy... In this way the world no longer has anything to do with God, but only with man"[68].

Making oneself accessible to the transcendental attributes of being means that one gives preference to being over having. In the heart of being lie unity, truth, goodness and beauty which invite us to a community with being and fill our mind with perfection[69]. Moreover, the limited

[66] *General Theory of Value*, New York 1926.
[67] *Les hommes contre l'humain*, 127.
[68] E. Mounier, *Révolution personnaliste et communautaire (Oeuvres* I), 390.
[69] See G. Marcel, "L'être devant la pensée interrogatoire", *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 52(1958) 1-42, p.15: "Il y a au coeur de l'être comme l'amorce d'un dynamisme ascensionnel qui ne peut s'achever que dans une *koinonia* parfaite".

perfections of the beings we know point beyond themselves to a source from which they proceed and in which they exist.

In the coming chapters being will be shown to be one, meaningful, good and beautiful. It must be noted here that these transcendental concepts refer to being insofar as it is determined in itself, lies open to the intellect and is desired by the faculty of striving. Fundamentally the transcendentals signify being itself but viewed formally they are beings of reason (*entia rationis*), viz. each denotes an aspect of being which reason views as if it were something separate and then attributes to being.

In the genetic order the sequence of these transcendental concepts is as follows: the concept of not-being (that is, not being 'this') follows on that of being. From these two results the concept of division. As we perceive that being is not divided in itself, we form the concept of unity. The concept of plurality follows as we understand that one being is not another and is divided from it[70]. The concepts of true, good and beautiful are formed later by means of a reflection on the objects of our intellect and will. We understand that being as such is knowable and good. By further reflection we see that this holds true of all beings. However, there is a certain distance in time between this metaphysical insight and the formation of the concepts of being, thing, unity and something at the start of our intellectual life.

[70] *Quaestio disputata de potentia*, q.9, a.7 ad 15.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEING HAS A CONTENT

In his deduction of the transcendental concepts, Thomas notes that one may add to being a general positive mode which expresses that which is found within all beings, namely essential content[1]. In this way the concept 'thing' (*res*) is obtained. For the distinction between the concept of being and that of thing Aquinas refers to Avicenna[2]. He uses the term *res* (thing) to signify being as having a particular content. The concept of thing comes second, after that of being: at first the intellect is struck by the being real of things and expresses it in a first, most general and common concept; the term *res*, on the other hand, signifies being as having a certain determinate content. Hence it expresses the fact that being has an essence.

The meaning of the term res

The medieval doctors generally deal with the meanings of the term *res* in their commentaries on a text of Peter Lombard in which this author treats the question as to whether sin is something[3]. In this passage Lombard observes that on the one hand Augustine asserts that sin is a thing, but that on the other he reserves the term 'thing' to denote what exists in the world.

Thomas points out that the term *res* is used in various senses, namely to denote everything that has a certain fixed being in reality[4] (this is the meaning which expresses the essence of being), but also to refer to being as that which can be known. With Bonaventure and others he holds that the latter meaning depends directly on the root *reor, reris*. In this sense *res* can signify denials and privations and hence sin may also be called a thing.

Even if this division does not fully correspond to the usage of the term in Augustine, St. Thomas nonetheless furnishes an excellent explanation of the meanings of the term *res*. It is striking that he mentions in the first

[1] *Q.d. de veritate*, q.1, a.1.
[2] See the *Metaphysica* I 6, 72va (Van Riet, *Liber de philosophia prima*, I, p.33ff.).
[3] *Liber II Sent.*, d.37.
[4] *In II Sent* ., d.37, q.1,a.1: "...quod habet esse ratum et fixum in rebus". Cf. also "cosa" in the *Enciclopedia filosofica* II 67ff.

place what could be called the entitative meaning of the term, manifestly because he views it as fundamental, whereas from an etymological standpoint both in Latin and in the Germanic languages the term *res* or thing refers in the first place to the object of thought.

There is no strict equivalent for the word thing in Greek. The terms τὸ ὄν, χρῆμα, πρᾶγμα and τὸ ὑποκείμενον can all be used to signify 'thing'. None of these, with the possible exception of τό ὑποκείμενον, refers immediately to that which presents itself to our thought. The term πρᾶγμα has various meanings: the action performed, the subject under discussion, the actual facts, the thing[5]. In Plato πρᾶγμα means the thing as distinct from the words used to speak about it, then the content of thought and finally the things perceived by the senses[6].

Aristotle emphasizes the distinction between the thing as a reality outside the mind and the thinking person; he makes things the basis and the criterion for the truth of our knowledge[7]. Aristotle's position in this regard is that of realism: things are accessible to and are known by the intellect, i.e., they are present in the cognitive faculty, —not, it is true, as physical entities, but in an intentional manner as things known[8]. Reality fertilizes the knowing subject bringing it from potential to actual knowledge[9]. Realism is considered by some a naive theory because it would ignore the difficulties which in later ages were raised against its simple and straightforward way of explaining the phenomenon of cognition. This reproach, however, does not apply to Aquinas' realism as he gives an analysis and elucidation of the entire process of knowing in such a way that the philosopher who takes pains to study his text with care discovers that this account of the development of human knowledge is borne out by evidence[10].

Realism rejects conceptualism, a theory which holds that we know representations while things themselves remain out of reach. According to this theory knowledge is only a knowledge of images and represen-

[5] See P. Hadot, "Sur divers sens du mot PRAGMA dans la tradition philosophique grecque", in *Concepts et catégories dans la pensée antique*, edited by P. Aubenque, Paris 1980, 309-319. Cf. E. Tugendhat, *TI KATA TINOS*, Freiburg-München 1958, 14ff. on *the hypokeimenon* as that which presents itself to be known. Sometimes τὸ ὑποκείμνον is used in this sense. Tugendhat points out that the presence of being before the knowing subject, expressed by these terms, means that according to Aristotle the essence of things manifests itself to what is outside and becomes a determination of the knowing subject (p.21).
[6] *Phaedo* 99 e. See P. Natorp, *Platos Ideenlehre*, Hamburg 1922, 541 (under 'Ding').
[7] See *Metaph.* IX, ch.10, 1051 a 34 - b 9.
[8] On this point see J. Maritain, *Les degrés du savoir*, 176ff.
[9] See St. Thomas, *In X Metaph.*, lectio 2, n.1957.
[10] Cf. L. Régis, *Epistemology*, New York 1959, 109ff.

tations or of approaches to reality[11]. This view is also called phenomenism. In antiquity it was upheld by the Sophist Protagoras and the Cyrenaics[12]. A somewhat similar opinion is encountered in modern philosophy. According to John Locke we really only know our ideas, which are as many entities present in our cognitive faculties. Reality outside us is distinct from these and can only be known approximately[13]. Kant forces the issue on this point: reality, *das Ding an sich*, lies behind the forms of representation and categories of thought; it remains concealed from us. —Finally, idealism as it developed after Kant rejects even this reality: our knowledge is no longer concerned with a world outside itself. For Fichte there is nothing without thought and no thought without a subject. Hegel takes the ultimate step of reducing the thing to the idea.

'Thing' as a transcendental concept

In the account given above we considered the meaning of thing as denoting a reality lying open to us and presenting itself to be known. We must now consider more closely the meaning of thing as a transcendental concept. St. Thomas distinguishes between *res* as concrete reality, *res* as the content of a concept and *res* as the essence of individual beings[14]. In the latter sense the concept *res* is different from that of being. In some of his treatises he uses the term as a transcendental concept[15], although it has been suggested by Suarez and others that as a transcendental *res* is of minimal importance to Thomas. This assertion is apparently based on the sporadic references to it in Aquinas' works, whereas unity, truth and goodness occur frequently. To this one might reply that what the term stands for is so basic that it is presupposed by Thomas in all his analyses: that being has a content and meaning is evident and need not be dwelled upon further. The concept of 'being' (*ens*) develops into that of 'thing', while the concept of 'being real' is expressed by the verb 'to be' which is derived from the noun 'being'[16]. It is important to draw attention to the *De veritate* q.1, a.1 which states that the concept of *res* is acquired by the addition to being of a general 'mode'. This means that

[11] See L. Noel, *Notes d'épistémologie thomiste*, Louvain-Paris 1960, 105.
[12] Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* VII 195.
[13] *Essay Concerning Human understanding*, II, ch.1 etc.
[14] *In I Sent.*, d.25, q.1, a.1.
[15] *S.Th.* I 39,3 ad 3:"Hoc nomen res est de transcendentibus".
[16] *In I Peri hermenaias*, lectio 5, n.50: "...id quod est fons et origo ipsius esse, scilicet ipsum ens". The concept of being is formed due to the contact of the intellect, through the senses, with existing things. The concept of being (*esse*) is formed from that of *ens*, as will be shown in chapter 13.

the term does not signify quiddity alone but being as having an essential content. Therefore, *res* ordinarily expresses existing things, such as the *res naturales*. God and the divine Persons are also a *res*[17]. For this reason, the reading (in a passage of the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*) which says that the term signifies quiddity alone does not seem correct[18].

In most of St. Thomas' works *res* signifies that which is the object of our knowledge or which is referred to by such signs as the words in a language. In this way its use is very wide. Following Augustine Aquinas calls divine Trinity the supreme *res*[19], and he also speaks of the *res* which is God[20]. Usually the term means existing things, whether they belong to nature (*res naturales*) or are man made (*res artificiales*). But stress is always laid on their whatness[21].

In day-to-day language we make no distinction between being and thing as St. Thomas does. 'Being' is seldom used; the term 'thing' refers to concrete reality and appears to have taken the place of being. This is quite natural if we consider that the concept 'thing' is acquired by an addition to being.

As mentioned above Avicenna was probably the first to make the distinction between 'being' and 'thing' and to point out that *res* denotes the essence or content of a thing, which is the object of our intellectual knowledge. Avicenna holds that 'thing' as one of the first concepts stands next to 'being'. To define 'thing' more closely he suggests that it is best to use some pseudo-definitions such as "a thing is that about which we can rightly make a statement"[22].

Avicenna contrasts 'thing' with existence and associates it with nature (essence). Each thing has a nature by which it is what it is. Now this nature is not its existence. Avicenna also observes that existence is always attached to 'thing' even in the case of a 'thing of thought' (*ens rationis*), since the latter exists at any rate in thought. It would seem that Avicenna's concept of 'thing' is not quite that of Aquinas, since to him

[17] *In I Sent.*, d.25, q.1, a.4.
[18] *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 2, n.533. S. Ducharme, "Note sur le transcendantal *res* selon saint Thomas d'Aquin", in *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 9(1940)85-99, insists on this particular text, but the wording as it stands now does not seem to be the correct rendering of what Aquinas wrote. It could well have been contaminated by a preceding "tantum".
[19] *S.Th.* I 39, 3 ad 3.
[20] *In I Sent.*, d.2, q.1, a.3 ad 3.
[21] *In I Sent.*, d.8, q.1, a.1: "Res...proprie denominatur a quidditate sua". See S. Ducharme, "Note sur le transcendantal *res* selon S. Thomas", in *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 9(1940) 85-99.
[22] *Metaph.* I, ch.5. Cf. *La métaphysique du shifâ* (books I - V), transl. by G. Anawati, Paris 1978, 107.

the essence has a certain reality of its own, although it is not real in our world.

Forming the concept 'thing'

Avicenna's explanation also raises the question as to when we form the concept 'thing'. It would seem that the answer is as follows: we come to know reality (*ens*) and, as soon as we make statements about reality, we form the concept of 'being real', that is, we acquire the verb 'to be'. We also become aware of our thinking about things and form the concept 'thing', namely that which is the object of our thinking. Everything in the universe is an object for our intellect, as it has some content and meaning. Hence we use the term 'thing' to denote being inasmuch as it is the object of intellect. This usage does not exclude the sense of being real but implies it. The concept 'thing' is a certain determination of that of being. Having first distinguished that which is real, we now conceive it as a thing. This explains why in daily language the word 'thing' has supplanted 'being'. Laurentius Valla (1407-1457) considers *res* the king of all transcendentals. It even takes the place of being for it is "that thing which is"[23].

Thomas asserts that 'thing'is one of the transcendentals. It is, indeed, evident that everything that is has a content and must be something. The contrary is simply unthinkable. Plato points out repeatedly that to speak is to say something and not nothing. Things are not exclusively in themselves and for themselves as if they were a closed world without a message for other things[24]. A person who does not say *something* says absolutely nothing[25]. Aristotle holds the same view: in order to speak meaningfully, it is necessary to say something[26]; everything that becomes and exists, comes from something and is something in one of the categories of being[27]. "Being has content", or "being must have an essence" is one of the fundamental principles of being. Every being has some particular nature[28].

[23] *Dialecticae Laurentii Valli Libri Tres*, I, ch. 1 ff.
[24] *Theaetetus* 156 e- 157 b. Cf. F. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 48-51.
[25] *Sophistes* 237 e.
[26] *Metaph.* 1006 a 13.
[27] *Metaph.* 1032 a 12-15.
[28] See R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le sens commun et la philosophie de l'être*, 165: "Tout être est d'une nature déterminée". See also J. Maritain, *Sept leçons sur l'être et les premiers principes de la raison spéculative*, Paris, s.a., p.104.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE UNITY OF BEING BEING AS SOME ONE THING

The problem of the unity and plurality of things preoccupied philosophers from the start. The School of Miletus set out from one *archê*, a primary principle and the material (e.g. water, indefinite mass, air...) from which everything was said to have arisen. Early Pythagoreans, on the other hand, appear to have accepted a kind of dualism, although some scholars, including F. Cornford, assume that they believed in a primary monad as the origin of the Limit and the Unlimited, the pair of principles by which they explained reality. In any case, the One (the Limit) has a position of great importance in Pythagoreanism, as it confers to things determination, order and structure. Parmenides, who was from the School of Pythagoras, teaches the absolute unity of being (εἷς ἔστιν); he is the first to lay down unity as an attribute of being. Apparently the Pythagorean thinkers were aware that the question as to whether being must be reduced to one principle or not is a fundamental issue in philosophy[1].

Plato and Aristotle on the One

When Plato began to use the term 'the One' to denote the highest principle, this term was the current word for referring both to one as a number and to the whole of reality. Plato himself saw in the One the principle of the essence of things[2]. It is in any case proper to every idea to be one[3]. As the factor determining the essence of things the One is also the principle of their knowability[4]. This led later Platonists to assert that all definitions depend on the One[5].

What is Aristotle's position in regard to this Platonic doctrine of the

[1] See St. Thomas, *In XI Metaph.*, lectio 3, n.2194: "Necessarium est considerare utrum omnia entia reducantur ad aliquid unum vel non".
[2] *Metaph.* 1080 b 6; 1084 b 16; Aleander, *In Metaph.* 53, 2-11. Eudorus of Alexandria understands the observation of Aristotle on the causality of the One in such a way that the One is the cause of all things and also of matter (apud Simplicium, *In Phys.* 181, 10).
[3] *Rep.* 507 b.
[4] Cf. *Parm.* 135 b-c: if an idea had no unity, it could not be known.
[5] Simplicius, *In Phys.* 231, 16ff.

One? Faithful to his method of careful analysis of the language we use, he enumerates the various meanings of the term one (τὸ ἕν πολλαχῶς λέγεται)[6]. In this way he became the first philosopher to give an inventory of the modes of unity and being one:

> Are one although in different ways: the continuous, the whole, things having one definition, the individually one.
> To be one is to be separated in space, in concept or in essence; the first of a group, in particular of quantity, is called one.

In his account of the Pythagorean and Platonic doctrine of principles Aristotle emphasizes that the One is not itself a separate being, but an attribute of something else. The reason is that the One is a universal concept, but no universal is a substance. Consequently the One must always belong to some particular thing and is to be identified with the essence of the category in which it is found[7]. This is tantamount to saying that unity is a transcendental property of being, although in some texts Aristotle,—possibly in a discussion with Platonists—, speaks of "the One and being" as if the One preceded being; also, in *Metaph.* IV, ch.2, he mentions "the classes of the One" and refers to a reduction of all things to unity and plurality which reminds of the Platonic reduction of being.

In the Early Academy all things were said to be dependent on two first principles, the One and the Dyad. Plato's immediate successor, Speusippus, believed in an evolving hierarchy of being in ten stages, which he may have seen reflected in the concentric spheres of the physical universe. Xenocrates, who succeeded Speusippus as the head of the Academy, called the First Principle God, the One or the Monad[8]. Later Platonic tradition placed the One above being because it is indivisible and thus beyond intellectual analysis[9], a position which came to be Plotinus' point of departure: the One is above thinking and knows neither itself nor other things[10]. The One is the principle of essence (*ousia*) and of being[11]. Nothing can exist if it is not one[12]. All things participate in the One (which encloses everything in itself), but they are no longer pure unity[13]. Plotinus adds that plurality is impossible without some form of unity[14].

[6] *Metaph.* 1052 a 15.
[7] *Metaph.* 1053 b 19.
[8] Xenocrates, fragm.15 (Heinze).
[9] See Plato's *Parmenides* 142 a.
[10] *Enn.* V 6, 3.
[11] V 5, 10.
[12] VI 9, 1.
[13] V 5, 9.
[14] Proclus also says so in his *The Elements of Theology*, prop.1, but the assertion itself was first made by Plato. See Plotinus, *Enn.* V 6, 3.

Because the One is beyond everything that can be thought, we can only determine it by means of negations[15]. In emanation, that is in the hypostases which issue from the One, like water flows from a spring, the One becomes inferior to itself.

The absolute priority of the One over being in Neoplatonism may perhaps be explained partly on historical and religious grounds, such as the "mystical character" of the One which is above all determinations. In reality, however, the decisive factor may well have been a preference for philosophical monism. In such a monistic view all determination and division take place *within* a given unity; being is only imperfect unity since it is multiple[16].

Theories of the unity of being in the Middle Ages

The Neoplatonic tradition lived on in the writings of Proclus and the pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita as well as in Arabic philosophy. According to Ps. Dionysius the One is exalted above every concept of unity one can think of[17]. The One itself cannot be measured, but is nevertheless the necessary condition for the possibility of generating numbers[18]. In several of his works Avicenna writes that the First Being, which is necessary and not-composed, must be one, as duality is the cause of composition[19]. The First Cause is really one without any plurality. Because the substances we know display a great deal of diversity, there must be intermediary links between them and the One. In his *Metaphysics*, tract.3, ch.2 Avicenna sums up the meanings of the One. His division was completed by the Scholastics and may be represented as follows:

The different meanings of unity and being one

(a) Unity as an attribute of either incomposite beings or of composite beings. The latter can be either composite *per se* (material substances are composed *per se* of matter and form) or composite *per accidens*, unity due to combination as the parts of a machine; unity by causality such as an operation brought about by causes working together; unity by the impression of a form on a subject such as the concrete whole of the substance and the accidents which determine it.

[15] Proclus, *In Parmenidem* VI, 1108, 19-20.
[16] See J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclos*, Paris 1982, 93-101.
[17] *De divinis nominibus*, c.2, 42.
[18] *O.c.*, ch.13, 446.
[19] *La source de Vie*, book III (edit. F.Brunner), Paris 1950, 55.

(b) The unity of a particular mode or form of being. This can be a thing of reason (*ens rationis*) such a the unity of a genus or a species; furthermore, unity in reality, scil. the formal unity of things which have a generic or a specific community; next, the accidental unity of an accident with substance; finally, unity in the category of quantity.

Criticisms of Avicenna's position

Just as Avicenna considers the being (*esse*) of things to be an accidental attribute of their essences, so too he attributes unity to them in the same way. Averroes criticises this position sharply[20]. According to Avicenna everything strives for the One. The Arabic treatise *De unitate* translated by Gundisalvi and frequently attributed to Boethius sums up this doctrine as follows: "All things strive after unity in such a manner that even those that are many wish to be called one. All things that are, are what they are either by attempting to be through real unity or at any rate by imitating unity"[21].

Despite the major contributions Avicenna made to the study of unity, Thomas criticises him on the following points:

(a) Avicenna makes no distinction between 'one' as an attribute of being and 'one' as a principle of numbers[22].

(b) He does not accept the correct definition of unity as undivided being[23].

(c) According to Avicenna transcendental unity is predicamental unity. This is the reason why he adds unity to being as an accident[24].

(d) He asserts that every multiplicity results from a quantitative division[25].

The unity of being and the oneness of God

In his study of unity the Christian philosopher is inspired above all by *Deuteronomy* 8, 4: "Hear, o Israel, the Lord our God is one". Since God

[20] *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 3, ch.2, comm.3 92r (Venice 1560): "Avicenna autem peccavit multum in hoc quod dixit quod unum et ens significant dispositiones essentiae rei".

[21] Edit.Correns, *BGPMA* I 9.

[22] *In I Sent.*, d.24, q.1, a.3. According to Aquinas this view leads to dangerous errors. See *In X Metaph.*, lectio 3, n.1981. —Even Duns Scotus asserts that the one as a transcendental concept is not essentially different from the one as the principle of number (*Quaestiones subtil.* IV, q.2, n.17).

[23] *In I Sent.*, d.24, q.1, a.3 ad 3.

[24] *Quodl.* X, q.1, a.3 ad 3.

[25] *S.Th.* I 30, 3. Cf. T.O. Shaughnessy, "St. Thomas and Avicenna on the Nature of the One", in *Gregorianum* (1960)647-679.

is the highest being, the conclusion follows that the highest being is one. Hence St. Augustine can write: "Being is nothing else than being one. Accordingly, a thing is to the extent that it acquires unity. Operation, correspondence and concord are proper to unity and, due to these, composite things are to the extent that they are one. Simple things owe their unity to themselves as they are one. However, the things that are not one imitate unity through the concord of their parts and are to the extent that they achieve this"[26]. E. Gilson observes that Augustine's social doctrine concerning the necessity of peace and concord in society is based on this foundation[27]. According to Augustine pure multiplicity is nothingness. Not one single body could exist without a degree of unity[28]. To be a body it requires a certain homogeneity; it must belong to a concrete species in order to be capable of definition[29].

Aquinas on the unity of being

Thomas insists on the priority of being over and against unity. Being is the first concept to enter the human intellect; all other concepts can be reduced to it. In regard to the question of the transcendental unity of being he writes: "I answer by stating that 'one' does not add anything to being but merely the denial of division. 'One' is nothing other than undivided being. From this very fact it is clear that (in propositions) one and being are convertible. Every being is either simple or composite. However, what is composite does not exist as long as its parts are separated, but exists after they are together and make up the composite thing. It is therefore clear that the being of each thing exists in undividedness. For this reason everything keeps its unity as it keeps its being"[30].

As this passage shows, Aquinas confirms not only the unity of being in general but also that of concrete being. Even if the latter is composite, it must nonetheless constitute a unity. This is only possible if the components are related to one another as act to potency. St. Thomas formulates this doctrine as follows: "In every composition there must be two (components) which are related to one another as act to potency"[31].

[26] *De moribus manich.*, II 6, 8.

[27] *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin*, 278, n.1.

[28] *De vera religione*, 34: "Nec tamen corpus ipsum esset, nisi utcumque unum esset. Porro utcumque unum esse non posset, nisi ab eo quod summe unum est id haberet".

[29] *De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus*, 16, 59.

[30] *S.Th.* I 11, 1. Cf. L. Oeing-Hanhoff, *Ens et unum convertuntur. Stellung und Gehalt des Grundsatzes in der Philosophie des hl. Thomas von Aquin*, *BGPMA* 37, 3, Münster 1953.

[31] *Compendium theologiae*, I ch.9.

[32] I 76, 1.

Unity characterizes and permeates being to such an extent that "something is being in the manner in which it is one"[32], in other words "everything keeps its unity as it keeps its being"[33]. It follows that God, who is the First Being and Infinite Being, is one in the highest degree[34]. Everything outside of him is limited and hence composed out of the act of being and a factor which limits this being to a particular manner of being. Furthermore, everything that is composite has a cause, because it cannot compose itself[35]. If this cause does not hold together the components of a thing, the thing falls apart[36]. The unity of God is the basis and the model for all unity outside God.

The unity of being also holds on the level of knowledge. A thing can only be known to the extent it is. Our intellect seeks to reduce multiplicity to a certain unity. It forms the concepts of species and genus which are rightly described as "one out of many and applying to many". The intellect seeks unity, at least a unity of order, so that it is able to know. Hence unity is both a subjective and objective condition for the life of the mind[37]. Plurality is not knowable and cannot exist if it does not come under some form of unity[38]. Even if a thing ceases to be one in some manner, it must still be so in another way. Multiplicity is also a kind of unity[39].

At this point we come across the question as to what is the origin and cause of multiplicity. The Greek philosophers did not know the concept of creation and hence they came to grip with this problem to a lesser degree than the Arabic thinkers who were acquainted with the creation of the world by God through the *Coran*. They applied the Neoplatonic principle that "only what is one can come forth from the One" (*ex uno non provenit nisi unum*), which meant that the multiplicity of the things of the universe proceeds from God only by means of intermediaries. Christian theologians such as William of Auxerre, on the other hand, observed that creation is not a form of mechanical causality but depends on the free will of God[40]. St. Thomas elaborates this doctrine further:

[33] I 11, 1.
[34] I 11, 4.
[35] I 3, 7; *S.C.G.* I, ch.22.
[36] *S.C.G.* I, ch. 18.
[37] See L. Lachance, *L'être et ses propriétés*, Montréal 1950, 194.
[38] I 11, 1: "Ipsa multitudo non contineretur sub ente, nisi contineretur sub uno".
[39] I 11, 2 ad 1.
[40] *Summa aurea*, *Opera omnia* I 623a.

every creature has an immediate relationship to God and imitates him in its own way. Hence manifold and different things originate from God[41].

The origin and meaning of the concept of unity

What is the precise origin of the concept of unity? According to a text of Thomas, which convinces by the clarity of its argumentation, the first concepts are those of being and not-being. The intellect understands that this being is not that being, formulates the separation of both and then concludes that the individual being itself is not divided. In this way the concept of unity results. When this concept has been acquired, that of multiplicity follows. Aquinas repeatedly emphasizes that the concept of multiplicity follows on that of unity, but that the concept of division (*divisio*) is prior to that of unity, although unity is in reality prior[42]. There is a degree of circularity in the deduction of the concept of multiplicity: multiplicity follows on unity, but in the knowledge acquired through the senses multiplicity (*multitudo*) is prior[43].

As we have explained, being precedes being one. In other words, not the negation of division, formulated by us in a judgment, comes in the first place, but being which communicates itself[44]. Some philosophers, however, have given precedence to unity, apparently because of its negative, elusive and indeterminate character, or perhaps because of the fact that unity is a condition for the intelligibility of things. However, being precedes being one, and being one is an attribute of being.

A next question we must answer is whether the concept of unity, formally understood, is a thing of thought (*ens rationis*), as 'true' and 'good' are, since they express a relation of thought between things and the intellect and will. When we use the term 'one' without reference to real things, it signifies a negation of division and hence it is a thing of thought, but when the term is applied to being (and hence also in the sense in which we first conceive unity) it denotes the being itself which is undivided and so is no longer a thing of thought: "Unity signifies...not only the being itself which is undivided, but also the reality of this being with this absence of division"[45].

Being separate from other things, which is often considered to be a

[41] *Expositio in Boetii De Trinitate*, q.4, a.1; *Q.d. de pot.*, q.3, a.4; Q.d. *de veritate*, q.23, a.5.
[42] *In X Metaph.*, lectio 4, n.1991.
[43] *Ibid.*, nn.1995-1996.
[44] This fact has far reaching consequences. See below the passus on Hegel's position.
[45] *Q.d. de pot.*, q.9, a.7. See also John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theol.*, disp.11, a.1,n.23ff.

property of unity, does not formally belong to the concept of the one[46]. To close our remarks we may add that St. Thomas uses the concept of what has been called transcendental number which is formed on an analogy with predicamental number and signifies the plurality of immaterial beings, a plurality which is not based on matter and quantity[47].

The idea of unity in modern philosophy

With regard to the place of unity in modern thought we should first mention Suarez who devotes four of his *Disputationes* to problems of unity[48]: unity does not add something positive to being but only the negation of division. This point is discussed in greater detail in the second section: Cajetan, following St. Thomas, holds that unity adds only a negation, but according to others unity not only signifies a negation but also the entity of which this negation is predicated. According to Suarez the difference between these views lies more in the way in which they are expressed than in a difference of doctrine.

John Locke considers unity to be the most simple idea; it is also the most universal[49]. While Spinoza reduces unity to a mere thing of thought[50], Leibniz remains close to Scholastic tradition: being and unity are convertible[51]. He distinguishes between what is one by itself (an individual living being in which one monad dominates) and the accidentally one (composite things such as anorganic bodies)[52]. According to Leibniz the unity of a quantity of water is not greater than that of a shoal of fish swimming in it. Unity, however, has a constitutive power: the monad is because it is one. In this respect Leibniz continues in the line of Neoplatonic thought.

As has been mentioned in chapter two, according to Kant the transcendental concepts are logical conditions for the intelligibility of things. Unity is one of the apriori categories of quantity (unity, plurality, totality). In Hegel's system unity occupies an important place. In

[46] Cf. S. Kowalczyk, "Une tentative de description de l' unité transcendantale", in S. Kaminski, M. Kudzialek, Z.J. Zdybicka, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin: pour le septième centenaire de sa mort*, Lublin 1976, 143-154, p.147.
[47] I 30, 3.
[48] *Disp.* 4 to 7. For our purpose sections IV,1, 6 and 9 are most relevant.
[49] *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II ch.16.
[50] *Cogitata metaphysica* I, ch.6: "Nos autem dicimus unitatem a re ipsa nullo modo distingui, vel enti nihil addere sed tantum modum cogitandi esse, quo rem ab aliis separamus quae ipsi similes sunt, vel cum ipso aliquo modo conveniunt".
[51] *Lettres à Arnauld*, lettre du 30 avril 1687 (edit. Gerhardt, II 97).
[52] *Lettre à A. des Bosses* (1712) (Gerhardt, II, 457).

becoming, being and nothingness come together and are one; nothingness is the same as being[53]. At the intermediate levels unity is found in the being-for-itself (*Fürsichsein*), which excludes the other from itself[54]. Finally, as the concluding term of the dialectical process of the Idea there is the absolute unity of the concept and of objective reality. This unity is truth[55]. In this way unity becomes the foundation of the concept of objective reality which itself constitutes only one moment of the dialectical process of the Idea.

Whitehead's view of unity could also be called progressively dialectical. 'One' is the synthesis of the togetherness of the multiple. Thus unity is added to the many and a new multiplicity arises which then strives again for unity[56].

Karl Jaspers is perhaps the only modern philosopher to devote a considerable amount of space to reflections on the 'one'. The 'one' is another name for being[57]. In metaphysical thought we transcend the multiplicity of being in order to attain rest in the unity of existence[58]. Our experience of the world, on the other hand, does not achieve such unity[59]. Likewise we cannot reach a total unity of the mind[60]. Jaspers acknowledges an Unconditional which is the basis for all meaning; this Unconditional is one. It can, however, never be fully attained[61]. Hence the 'one' is the heart beating in the finitude of existence,—a beam of the unknown, unique light[62]. Philosophy is accordingly the self-ascertaining (*Selbstvergewisserung*) of the 'one' in our existence[63]. Nevertheless Jaspers refuses to admit that the 'one' contains all truths: only a partial communication of truth takes place because being is in the process of becoming[64].

When we attain unity we become ourselves[65]. The existential unity (that is, the unity which we experience when we clarify existence (*Existenzerhellung*) is (a) a frontier as the historical determination of ourselves in our attempt at self-identification which reveals the depth of

[53] *Enzyklopädie*, § 88, 4.
[54] *O.c.*, §96.
[55] *O.c.*, §215.
[56] *Process and reality*, 288f.
[57] *Philosophie*, I 28. The following quotations are all from this work.
[58] Pp. 48-49.
[59] P. 63.
[60] P.179.
[61] P. 261.
[62] III, p.118.
[63] I, p. 261.
[64] III 116ff.
[65] *L.c.*

being; (b) the whole as an idea; (c) the unity of existential origin, namely of a decision based on choice. One can never become truly conscious of oneself if one refuses to take such a decision[66]. Its opposite is absent-mindedness and indecision.

We do not know the world except to the extent to which we bring that which is manifold and scattered to a degree of unity, a unity which is not, however, that of transcendence[67]. Unity, as we think it, is in the first place numerical unity, thereafter the whole and finally the unity of being which possesses self-consciousness. The 'One' as transcendence is above all of these[68].

One could say in conclusion that Jaspers sums up several important insights into the nature of unity, but he does so in a manner which is not always clear and lacks system. He emphasizes unity as the goal of man, as related to the human self and as a condition for knowledge[69]. For Jaspers 'the One' is also the symbol of a hidden spring of reality which he refers to only in highly vague terms.

Being as some One Thing

After the treatment of the concept of unity the term *something* also needs to be commented upon briefly. In his deduction of the transcendentals in the passage of the *Quaestio disputata de veritate* quoted above St. Thomas argues that as soon as we have formed the concept of separation (*divisio*) we can compare one being with another and form the concept of 'something'. This, he explains, is 'another what'(*aliud quid*).

Plato had given a similar deduction of the concept of something. He points out that when we say something, we mean *one* thing and thus he makes the concept of something follow on that of 'one'[70]. When we see or say something, he adds, we see or say something that is[71]. Aristotle for his part repeatedly emphasizes that things must be something. Each of the categories of being is another 'what'[72].

In the Platonic tradition, in particular in Neoplatonism, the concept of otherness plays an important role. Plato introduces the form 'otherness' as one of the largest genera in which all other forms participate.

[66] I, p. 117.
[67] I 119.
[68] I 119.
[69] I 121.
[70] *Sophistes* 237 d.
[71] *Theaetetus* 188c-189c; *Rep.* 478b.
[72] *Metaph.* 1032 a 12-15.

According to Aristotle, Plato (or at any rate some members of his School) referred to the Second Principle (generally called 'the Great and the Small' or 'the Indeterminate Dyad') as 'the Other'[73]. In this connection Aristotle notes that 'the different' is opposed to 'the same', but 'the other' to the thing itself. What he calls 'the other' is apparently what Thomas refers to as 'another what' (*aliquid*). Plotinus continued this Platonic tradition in regard to this point; in his doctrine of the hypostases he argues that *Noûs* and the One differ through otherness. This otherness, which is the basis for all later differences, is also described by him as movement: through its nature otherness is the first movement and the foundation of matter[74]. According to Proclus descent in the hierarchy of being brings forth otherness[75]. A similar doctrine is found in Porphyry[76]. Via St. Augustine, Dionysius, Boethius and Avicenna the problem of the other continued to hold an important place in philosophical thought[77].

To what extent does the term 'something' cover that of 'the other'? St. Thomas explains that not-being (*non ens*) can have a threefold meaning: it may refer to an incorrect statement; it may denote something which is becoming; finally it may mean that which is not *this*[78]. In the first judgment (the principle of contradiction: being is not not-being) the term apparently has the meaning last referred to. Because of what they are, things are not other things; they are other. Thus 'being other' is a real structure of reality[79]. 'Being other' is expressed in the first place by the concept of separation (*divisio*) which is the outcome of the first judgment. But 'the other' is apparently expressed by 'something' (*aliquid*) to the extent that this term signifies a thing in comparison with other things. The word denotes a being inasmuch as it is distinguished from other things. As we see, a significant category of classical thought is preserved in the philosophy of Aquinas. Here too Thomas brought great clarity by distinguishing between division (the separation of being and not-being) and 'something', sc. a thing in comparison with other things.'Other' means difference in general[80]. Difference can be total

[73] *Metaph.* 1087 b 26ff.
[74] Cf.J.M. Rist, "The Problem of Otherness in the *Enneads*" in *Le néoplatonisme (Colloque de Royaumont)*, Paris 1971, 82.
[75] See W. Beierwaltes, "Andersheit. Zur neuplatonischen Struktur einer Problemgeschichte", *Le néoplatonisme...* (n.74)365-372, p.369; Proclus, *In Parmenidem*, 1189, 3ff.
[76] *Isagoge (Commen. in Arist.gr.* IV, 1, 8, 8).
[77] Cf. St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, cc.30-32; Boethius, *De Trinitate*, c.1: "Principium enim pluralitatis alteritas est".
[78] *In V Phys.*, lectio 2, n.656.
[79] See *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 6, n.606.
[80] *In I Sent.*, d.4, q.1, a.3 ad 2.

between things which agree in no respect and differ through what they are, but there are also things which differ only due to an added form[81].

Among the philosophers of the modern period Hegel devoted much attention to 'something' and 'the other' for the simple reason that he was strongly influenced by Neoplatonism. 'Something' exists as the denial of the denial; it proceeds from the unity of being and nothingness. Besides 'something' as existing Hegel also distinguishes 'something' in becoming. The latter is transition and change[82]. Hegel does not take into consideration Aristotle's criticism that the opposite of the One is not the other but multiplicity.

The theme of 'the other' was transposed by the existentialists on an anthropological level. Sartre, for example, suspects that a separation-negation (not-being-myself) constitutes the basis for the concept of the other[83]. Even if this is a restrictive interpretation which leaves behind the level of metaphysics, it confirms in a sense the analysis of Aquinas.

Some authors believe that the transcendentals 'thing' and 'something' do not extend as far as unity, truth or goodness, for God is not a 'something' since he cannot be considered as one among others. Therefore, Campanella suggests, it would be better to call both terms subtranscendentals. However, this difficulty can easily be solved: God is definitely a *res*, inasmuch as he has an essential content, although in a totally different way from that of created things: his nature is that he is subsistent being itself. —The term 'something' can also be predicated of God, for like the other transcendentals it is a thing of reason which expresses what is proper to being. When applied to God it means that God is not created things. If one insists saying that before creation the concept does not apply to God, the answer is that before creation there are no transcendental concepts[84], although in his infinite perfection God possesses in an all-surpassing way what is expressed by these concepts.

[81] *In V Metaph.*, lectio 12, 916.
[82] *Wissenschaft der Logik* I 122ff. (edit. Suhrkamp, V 122-126).
[83] *L'être et le néant*, 301ff.
[84] As was argued above, these are formally speaking things of reason (*entia rationis*).

CHAPTER SIX

THE TRUTH OF BEING

As far back as the eleventh century St. Anselm observed that there are many who speak of the meaning of the term truth, but few who perceive the truth which lies in the essence of things[1]. It is this truth which we must now consider.

The meaning of the term ἀλήθεια

The Greek ἀλήθεια originally means something knowable to the extent that it can be pointed out or expressed, mainly in those cases in which this knowable or expressable something can also be represented incorrectly. Thus it means the situation as it is. In the language of law it denotes the real facts of the case which must be ascertained vis-à-vis the assertions of both parties. For historians ἀλήθεια is the event as it took place. To philosophers the term means that which really is[2].

In recent philosophical literature attention has been drawn to what is possibly the original meaning of the term, namely 'not hidden', 'not forgotten': being is true as it shows itself to us. To the Greeks reality is truth; it manifests itself and can be known. In the Pythagorean tradition light belongs to the essence of things. According to Parmenides being reveals itself in its purity[3].

In Plato's dialogues, besides its general meaning, the term also has the sense of genuine and real and is predicated of something which is as it should be. Thus Plato speaks of true guardians, the true city-state, a true leader[4]. Truth and being are called attributes of the same thing[5]. The clarity of our knowledge, he writes, depends on the truth of the object[6]. According to the *Phaedo* 66a reaching being is equivalent to acquiring the truth. Plato also asserts that that which is being in the highest degree

[1] De veritate, c.9.
[2] Cf. R. Bultmann, in Kittel, *TWNT* on *alêtheia*.
[3] See E. Heitsch, "Die nicht-philosophische ALETHEIA", in *Hermes*, 1962, 24-32; W. Luther, "Wahrheit, Licht und Erkenntnis in der griechischen Philosophie bis Demokrit", in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, 1968, 1-240; A.W.H. Adkins, "Truth, KOSMOS and ARETE in the Homeric Poems", *Classical Quarterly* 65 (1972)5-18.
[4] *Rep.* 347 d; 372 c; 464 c.
[5] *Rep.* 508 d; 537 d.
[6] *Rep.* 511 c.

is most knowable; what is in no way being, is not knowable at all[7]. Pure being is always true[8]: the idea of the Good gives truth to beings making them really knowable[9].

Besides this ontological meaning of the term 'true' Plato also uses 'true' in the sense of logical truth which he places in the soul[10]. He defines this truth as correspondence with reality[11]. The sense of truth, he writes, is the beginning of all good in the life of the gods as well as in that of man[12]. We must love truth and perform all our actions for the sake of truth[13].

Aristotle uses the term ἀλήθεια in the sense of "the facts", "the structure or nature of something"[14]. This is also the drift of a text from the *Metaphysics* in which we read that there are thinkers who "have said something about the principles of truth"[15]. But besides this meaning the term can also signify the truth of judgments and statements as it does in a well-known and often quoted passage: "He who thinks as separate that which is separate, and as attached that which is attached, possesses the truth, whereas he whose thought is in the contrary state is in error. If this is the case, when is that which we call truth present, and when not? We must pay careful attention to what we mean by these terms: it is not because we really think that you are pale that you are pale, but because you are pale, we who say so have the truth"[16]. According to this text the truth of our thinking and speaking depends on their correspondence with reality; reality is the basis of truth.

It should also be noted here that for Aristotle immediate sense perception is always true[17]. In sense-perception a direct grasp and knowledge of reality take place according as reality communicates itself. Likewise, the intellect in its first operation (*prima operatio*), namely the formation of concepts, is always true inasmuch as the concept always has a definite formal content which expresses something of reality[18].

In the text we quoted above reality is said to be the foundation of truth. However, in its most formal sense (as it is primarily used in language)

[7] *Rep.* 477 a.
[8] *Rep.* 585 c.
[9] *Rep.* 583 b; 517 c, etc.
[10] *Meno* 86 a.
[11] *Philebus* 39 a; 40 c; 54 b.
[12] *Laws* 730 c; Rep. 532 c.
[13] *Philebus* 58 c-d.
[14] *Metaph.* 983 b 1-3; *Magna moralia* 1182 a 26. See also Plato's *Timaeus* 51 c.
[15] *Metaph.* 993 a 30. Cf. 1005 b 3; 1009 b 1.
[16] *Metaph.* 1051 b 3.
[17] *De anima* 427 b 11.
[18] *Metaph.* 1051 b 17ff.

truth is in the intellect which affirms or denies something of something else: "...truth and error are not in things—it is not as if the good were true and the evil false—, but in thought"[19]. At first sight this text seems to contradict the passage quoted above. H. Maier and W. Jaeger speak in fact of a contradiction in Aristotle's concept of truth[20]. It is nevertheless possible to bring Aristotle's statements into agreement with one another and to construct a meaningful synthesis, as Thomas did. But before studying Aquinas' doctrine of truth, let us first examine the views of some Christian thinkers.

'Truth' in the Bible and in Christian thought

The Hebrew *'èmèt* originally refers to stability. When ascribed to persons it means steadfastness, fidelity and reliability. It is also stated of God. In contrast to the Greek ἀλήθεια 'èmèth also signifies a moral attitude, although it can also be used to indicate things that are real. In working out his doctrine of truth St. Augustine draws mainly on Sacred Scripture which calls God the Truth. Things are true to the extent that they resemble God who is the first Truth: "Other things may be said to resemble the One to the extent that they are, because to that extent they are also true. Their very being is a likeness with God and hence also with his truth. Just as existing things are true due to the truth, so too all things resemble one another due to the form of resemblance. Now because true things are true to the extent that they are, and are to the extent that they resemble one main form, for this reason all things that are possess that form which is the likeness of the Principle in the highest degree possible, and this is truth because it is without any inequality"[21].

In this argument which draws upon Plato's doctrine of participation, Augustine shows how the truth of things comes from God and consists in their likeness and harmony with God. For him this is more than a static, ontological relationship: man must ascend to the Truth itself[22]. Truth is accordingly a basic reality which lies beyond our human intellect; it must be our master and teacher[23]. Our supreme happiness consists in attaining and contemplating the Truth: "See, the Truth itself is ready for you:

[19] *Metaph.* 1027 b 25ff.
[20] H. Maier, *Die Syllogistik des Aristoteles*, Tübingen 1896; W. Jaeger, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Metaphysik*, Berlin 1912, 26.
[21] *De vera religione* 36, 66.
[22] *O.c.*, 39, 72.
[23] *De magistro* 12, 38.

embrace it, if you can, and enjoy it and rejoice in the Lord and he will fulfil the desires of your heart.... Do we still doubt that we shall be supremely happy in embracing the truth,... and shall we deny that we are immensely happy when we are steeped in and fed by the truth?[24].

In his *Soliloquia* II, ch.5 Augustine gives the following definition of ontological truth: "True is that which is in such a way as it appears to the person who knows it.—R: But then that which no one can know is no longer true?—... For this reason I say this and give the following definition and I do not fear that my definition will be criticised because it is too short. I posit then that true is that which is".

In his treatise *De veritate* the great theologian Anselm first lays down that truth lies in affirmation or negation. The truth is that correctness of the intellect by means of which it indicates that that is which is (*cum significat esse quod est*). In chapter seven, however, Anselm comes to the topic of the truth of the essence of things: because all things are in God's highest truth, they cannot be other than that what they are. Hence everything that is, is truly to the extent that it is what is in God. Now all things are what they ought to be (*vere hoc sunt quod debent*) and hence the conclusion follows: everything that is, is accordingly in the right manner (*recte est*).

Philip the Chancellor presents five definitions of truth, four of which are also mentioned by Albert the Great. As to the fifth he says: "A certain philosopher calls truth the correspondence of a thing and the intellect"[25]. Philip himself prefers the definition which calls truth the undividedness of being and of that which is (sc. when being is what it should be, it is undivided from its essence).

In his treatise *De bono* St. Albert the Great attempts to systematize the four classical definitions of truth:

(a) According to Augustine true is that which is (*verum est id quod est*).

(b) Hilary says that truth is that which manifests the being of something (*declarativum, manifestativum esse*).

(c) According to Anselm truth is a correctness which can only be perceived by the mind (*rectitudo sola mente perceptibilis*).

[24] *De libero arbitrio* 2, 13, 35.

[25] This definition goes back to Plato, but its wording may have come from the Latin translation of Avicenna's *Metaphysics*, II, tr.1, c.4. See the edition by G. Van Riet I, c.8 (55,65). See below n. 27.

(d) Finally there is the definition "the undividedness of being and of that which is"[26].

Albert gives preference to the definition of St. Anselm. In his opinion the definition of the truth as the agreement of the intellect with reality is not universal, as it is not applicable to God[27].

Albert himself distinguishes between

- the truth of things
  - uncreated
  - created
    - the being of things
    - the works of the will (cf. *John* 3,2)
    - the works of nature
    - the truth of possible things
- the truth of signs
  - in words
  - in statements
  - the truth of the Faith
  - the truth in fulfilling promises

Inasmuch as truth manifests and declares being (*declarativum esse*) it is convertible with being with regard to the thing (*secundum subiectum*) of which it is predicated, but with regard to its conceptual content being is prior: 'true' adds a relation to its form or to that by which a thing formally is[28]. Albert does not speak of the relation of being to the intellect which is of central importance in Aquinas's doctrine of ontological truth.

He has apparently not yet reached a clear insight into the relationship of logical to ontological truth and into that between the philosophical and Biblical use of the term. We shall see shortly how Aquinas synthesized the intuitions and suggestions of his predecessors. Let us first, however, continue with the history of the concept of truth.

Post-medieval theories of truth

In his *Metaphysical Disputations* Suarez first considers logical truth to discuss next the truth of things. He observes that it is not very clear what is meant by the relation of being to the intellect, on which St. Thomas

[26] This definition was perhaps first given by Avicenna. Avicenna also has the following description of truth: "Veritas cuiuslibet rei est proprietas sui esse quod stabilitum est rei" (*Metaphysica* VIII 6, 100r: Van Riet (*Philosophia Prima*), p.413).

[27] This definition (veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus) was used by the Jewish philosopher Isaac Israeli and was known to the Scholastics. See Israeli, *Liber de definicionibus* in *AHLDMA* XI (1937-1938)322-323. See also J.T. Nuckle, "Isaac Israeli's Definition of Truth", in *AHLDMA* VIII, 1-8.

[28] *De bono*, tr.1, q.1, a.10 (20, 15-17).

insists. Is it the divine intellect or rather any intellect? Suarez nevertheless accepts the doctrine of Aquinas[29].

The growing interest in the human subject which marked the modern period brought with it a disregard for ontological truth. Descartes writes that everything is true which he himself can see clearly and distinctly[30]. According to Hobbes, the thesis of the metaphysicians, namely that being, the one and the true are identical is bungling and naive (*nugatorium*) as everyone knows that 'man' and 'one man' or 'truly man' mean the same[31]. Hobbes is interested only in the truth of our statements. This shift to the subjective aspect of truth appears clearly in his *Leviathan*, chapter five.

According to Spinoza, it is a major error to call 'true' a transcendental property of being, as we can speak about things only in an improper sense or, if you like, rhetorically[32].—Leibniz, however, in regard to this point returned to the classical view and saw the basis for the truth of things in their mutual relationships in God's knowledge of them[33]. Thomasius, on the other hand, teaches expressly that truth does not belong to being, but is a property of the mind[34]. Thus in his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant did not do much more that give expression to a current of thought when he wrote that 'true' as a transcendental concept is an empty term.

In Hegel we find a new start. According to Hegel the truth is not something that is established for ever, but something that grows and develops. He assumed that there is a dialectical relationship between the human mind and reality: reality is only real if it is thought by the human mind, but by thinking reality the mind itself changes, for it loses itself and is alienated. The mind must, then, return to itself. In this way a continuous dialectial movement is generated. According to Hegel this dialectical process is truth. The human mind makes truth by thinking and operating actively. Whenever the mind becomes conscious of itself it becomes true. Accordingly truth is the uninterrupted process of God who unfolds himself in the world and of human reason which becomes God. Truth has neither start nor finish[35].

[29] *O.c.*, 8, sect.2-7.
[30] *Third Meditation.*
[31] *Logica* 3, 7.
[32] *Cogitata metaphysica* I, c.6: "Quocirca plane decepti sunt qui verum terminum transcendentalem sive entis affectionem judicarunt. Nam de rebus ipsis non nisi improprie vel si mavis rhetorice dici potest".
[33] *Lettre au P. A. des Bosses*, in *Philosophische Schriften* (Gerhardt), II 438.
[34] *Erotemata metaphysica*, c.5.
[35] Cf. L. Flam, "Le devenir de la vérité de Hegel à Heidegger", in *La vérité. Actes du XII^e congrès des sociétés de philosophie de langue française*, Louvain-Paris 1964, 286ff.

It is not easy to interpret correctly Hegel's view of truth. Its consequences are, however, far reaching. Marx and Engels were strongly influenced by Hegel. According to Engels reality is always becoming. He sees it as a great merit of Hegel that he did cast overboard the theory of the definitive value and certainty of human knowledge: for Hegel truth is no longer a series of tenets which have been shown to be true for all time, but truth lies in the process of knowing and in the development of the sciences which continually grow towards a limit which will never be reached. Engels deduces two conclusions from this point of departure: no philosopher will ever find absolute truth; praxis is more worthwhile than theory. Hegel had accepted a degree of regularity in the dialectical process, but Engels sees only flux and development. Whenever his opponents drew attention to the existence of eternal truths such as that of 2 x 2 = 4, Engels replied that these truths are insignificant.

Engels' theory rejects all objective truth. When applied to Marxism this implies that it too is merely a transitory system and that it will change in the course of time. Official Russian communism was unable to accept this 'disastrous' theory and held that there is absolute truth, namely that of communism. Lenin suggested that absolute truth can be attained via praxis and technique. However, other communist writers admit that individual man is incapable of attaining absolute truth, but that if all members of the collective strive for truth, their insights taken together will approach objective truth[36]. But it is not apparent how a sum of relative truths can become absolute truth. Furthermore, Lenin gives no proof of his thesis that we continually approach truth. This may be true in some fields of scientific work but does not seem to apply to such disciplines as ethics and metaphysics.

At the end of the nineteenth century we encounter the tragic figure of Nietzsche who no longer wishes to know the truth: "No, this bad taste, this will to have truth at any cost, this youthful madness in the love of truth is disgusting to us... We no longer believe that truth still remains truth when one tears away the veil"[37]. "Theoretical man enjoys himself and finds his satisfaction with the veil that was torn down and his supreme joy lies in the process of unveiling by his own power, a process which is always successful. There would not be any science, if it were only interested in the naked goddess and in nothing else"[38].

[36] V. Lenin, *Materialismus und Empiriokritizismus* (1908), 134. See also I.M. Bochenski, *Der sowjet-russische dialektische Materialismus*, Bern 1950, 95ff.
[37] *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Vorrede 2.
[38] *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 15.

It is true that William James accepted the definition of truth as correspondence with reality. But he understood it in the sense that our thoughts and words are true if they have practical use.—Phenomenology proposes some profound reflections on truth. Husserl placed the presence of *die Sache* (the object) in the centre of consciousness. *Die Sache* is the phenomenon as it appears to us. The phenomenological method seeks to describe and clarify this phenomenon. Because not everyone has the same insight, Husserl concluded that the phenomenon is not present to all in the same way. Heidegger developed this idea in his theory of man's encounter with being.

It is Heidegger's merit to draw attention to the (original?) meaning of truth as not-hiddenness: things are ordered to man. Man's being is unique inasmuch as it goes beyond its own limits and meets things. Truth is the revelation of things to man; it is what happens in man. An animal has no part in truth as things do not show themselves in their innermost essence to them. Animals only know things to the extent that they are useful to them.

Up to this point Heidegger seems to be perfectly right, but in his *Platons Lehre der Wahrheit* he protests against Plato's doctrine of an absolute and universal truth. Heidegger asserts that things never reveal themselves to us fully. We do not even know ourselves as we are. Our encounter with reality is determined by the moment in time at which it takes place. Only an aspect of things is shown to us. This revelation is mixed with darkness and man must wait patiently in the dark until it comes to him. In his *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger still speaks of an active attitude towards truth: man is seeking truth; in doing so he enters the world surrounding him (*Einbruch*). In such later works, however, as *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* he no longer mentions any such attitude; man now becomes "the shepherd of being" and lets go the attitude of domination while he stands ready for the moment at which reality chooses to show itself. By introducing a direct intuiton of the thing as unveiled (*in seiner Entdecktheit*) Heidegger hopes to overcome the duality between representative and judging thought on the one hand and the thing on the other[39]. One should notice, however, that in contrast to this widespread conceptualism, in Thomist epistemology there is no question of a cleft between thinking and reality: things are knowable and are present in thought.

Heidegger's vision presents a good picture of the plight of modern

[39] See A. de Waelhens, *Phénoménologie et vérité*, Louvain 1953, 116.

man who experiences difficulties in ascertaining what is true or false. But this theory lets go of every critical idea of truth and no longer admits of any verification. Scientific reasoning and proof appear to lose their meaning for the discovery of truth. According to Heidegger they pertain rather to a dangerous technique which makes one forget real truth[40]. In his *Gelassenheit* Heidegger writes that our times are dark as the midnight hour. If man returns to himself, perhaps thought will return to him. This patient availability and disposability of which Heidegger speaks, are however no more than a condition for the knowledge of truth. For Heidegger being ends up in appearance: it reveals and conceals itself. Thus for Heidegger who wishes to reinstate being in honour, the ontological and psychlogical priority of being are abandoned. His approach remains essentially a phenomenological description. Furthermore, by means of his postulate of being showing itself to hide again, Heidegger introduces an unwarranted and absurd degree of arbitrariness into the very heart of reality.

J.-P. Sartre denies that there is something like a human nature. Man has no particular essence as there is no God to conceive it. Man is nothing else but what he makes himself[41]. In his *Being and Nothingness* Sartre extends this to the physical world: the being-in-itself has no meaning and no secret; it is solid and isolated in its being and maintains no relationship whatever with what it itself is not[42]. The essence is not in the things, but is the meaning man gives to them[43]. Man transcends things not with regard to their being but as far as their meaning is concerned[44]. The reality of things is an absurd, viscuous mass which provokes disgust and anxiety in man.

According to M. Merleau-Ponty reality is knowable but in a limited way. The reason is that the human consciousness investigating it is in a particular situation and has a particular angle of approach[45]. Truth is *truth for me*[46]. Due to the presence of man being acquires meaning, for man makes it into meaning-for-him. In everything we think, conclude or decide there is always the influence of what we have thought and done up to the present[47]. There are only opinions but no always true doctrine;

[40] Cf. J.-D. Caputo, "The Problem of Being in Heidegger and the Scholastics", in *The Thomist* 41(1977) 62-91, p.89.
[41] *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, 22.
[42] *L'être et le néant*, 33.
[43] *O.c.*, 15.
[44] *O.c.*, 30.
[45] *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 73.
[46] *Sens et non-sens*, 187.
[47] *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 453.

ontological truth disappears to make way for the angle of approach under which the observer looks at things. Perspectivism holds the upperhand in epistemology. The ontological truth of things is reduced to what things mean for us at a certain moment of our life.

In Wittgenstein's positivism the reflection of the intellect on one's own thought is of no importance. The only thing that counts is the correspondence of a statement with facts. A priori propositions such as the axiomas in mathematics do not refer to actual reality. Rather they are an enormous tautology about things which our intellect cannot grasp[48]. Only empirical propositions refer to reality as we know it. The question about their truth is that of the verifiability of what we say. "Is true" is a superfluous addition to a proposition. "When someone says that the statement 'Queen Ann is dead' is true, then all he is saying is that Queen Ann is dead"[49]. From this point of view truth is nothing else than established fact. But other positivists consider truth as the mutual agreement of statements. According to Tarski we have truth if a statement in a meta-language agrees with the object-language in regard to a given point[50].

Finally, it should be mentioned that some thinkers view truth as that which still has to be made by man. Truth lies in the future and is the conclusion of a development or of a revolution. Even more primitive is the conviction that 'true' means what harmonizes with one's own ideology.

St. Thomas Aquinas on Truth

After this excursion into the history of the concept of truth let us return to Thomas Aquinas. According to him 'true' is what the intellect seeks to attain[51]. This assertion is an adaptation of Aristotle's famous statement at the beginning of the *Metaphysics* that all men desire knowledge. Man and his intellectual activity are what is highest in the world and therefore Thomas even writes that truth must be the final goal of the universe[52]. The essential operation of the mind is to know being. The

[48] A. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 86

[49] *O.c.*, 88.

[50] Cf. C. Hempel, "On the Logical Positivists' Theory of Truth", in *Analysis* II 4(1955)49-59. On Tarski's theory of truth see more in particular E.Tugendhat, "Tarskis semantische Definition der Wahrheit und ihre Stellung innerhalb der Geschichte des Wahrheitsproblems im logischen Positivismus", in *Philosophische Rundschau* 8(1960)131-159.

[51] *S.Th.* I 16, 1: "Verum est id in quod tendit intellectus".

[52] *S.C.G.* I 1: "Oportet igitur veritatem esse ultimum finem totius universi".

fulfilment of the human desire for knowledge lies in the intellect itself, since knowledge is in the knowing person. In the case of the will the situation is different: the will, being the faculty of striving, is attracted to what lies outside itself, scil. the outside things represented in human knowledge.

In accordance with this structure of the human mind, truth is in the first place in the intellect insofar as the intellect is in agreement with that which it knows. But we also use the term 'true' in a second and derived sense to denote things insofar as they are ordered to the intellect. Thomas observes that this second use of the word 'true' is less proper, although ontological truth, as signified by the term, is more basic than logical truth[53]. In the text we referred to Aquinas explains in greater detail how things are ordered to the intellect,—a novel expression, introduced by Aquinas, which at first sight seems rather vague. It did cause some difficulties to such scholastics as Suarez. Sometimes it is wrongly understood to signify that things are related to the mind of their Maker[54]. Now things are indeed related to their idea in God, but we maintain that this description of the ontological truth of being means in the first place the knowability and accessibility of things to the *human* intellect: things appear to have a meaning and content, which man does not make, but which he discovers and notices. This is the first and basic sense of the statement that things have a relation to the intellect. Their being ordered to the intellect is a relation of reason, which denotes also the entity itself which is adapted to the mind. The metaphysician analyses these facts. Having demonstrated the existence of God, creation and the dependence of things on the divine ideas, he concludes that the knowability of created things proceeds from God: the essences of things are shining with light because they are born of God's knowledge. In this way things depend on God's intellect, as a machine depends on the plan of the engineer who developed it[55].

As further consideration makes clear things are essentially (*per se*) ordered to the intellect on which they depend. An engineer determines the nature of the machine he designs. If all things depend on God, God's idea of them determines their essence. Things are ordered accidentally (*per accidens*) to the intellect on which they do not depend but to which they communicate themselves. Our intellect is determined and enriched

[53] *Q.d. de ver.*, 1, 4.

[54] See K. Bärthlein, *o.c.* (1976), 361.

[55] With regard to this dependence of things on God see our *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Leyden 1990.

by reality, not in a purely passive way: it makes its own the objective contents of things it receives. This being ordered to our intellect, characteristic of things,—everything that is can to some extent be known by us—, this communication of their content is accidental to things to the extent that even if there would be no human intellect, things would still have their intrinsic 'truth' to share. Things do not exist for themselves alone, but are willing to share[56]. This is apparently so because they receive their essence from God. Hence Aquinas states that things are placed between two intellects, that of God and that of man[57]. Were God's intellect not to exist,—an impossible suggestion—, then the content and the ontological truth of things would disappear. One can also express this by saying that God is the measure of things, that is the cause determining their being and nature, but that things in their turn are the measure of the human intellect. Man knows things because God thinks them.

Without this dependence on God's intellect, it would not be posssible to explain why things are knowable. Some philosophers denied that things can really be known. According to Protagoras, the structure of things, as we perceive it, is accidental; what appears to anyone to be true is true for him.—Sartre goes even further and denies the knowability of being-in-itself. Before him, Nietzsche had written that an extreme form of nihilism implies that every opinion, every assertion is necessarily incorrect, since there is no true world at all[58].

The cognoscibility of being

Things can be known. The sensible world around us is intelligible. In the natural sciences investigations extend to the most distant parts of the universe and the deepest structure of its components. It was Einstein who observed that the most incomprehensible thing about the world is its comprehensibility. Louis de Broglie for his part writes that we generally are not concerned about the point of departure of our scientific work, whereas the fundamental question is whether scientific work is possible. S. Peirce notes that we cannot even speak about something that is not knowable: that which is completely unknowable does not exist[59]. Jacques Monod for his part writes that 'the cornerstone of the scientific method

[56] See *Q.d. de potentia*, 2, 1: "Natura cuiuslibet actus est quod seipsum communicat quantum possibile est".

[57] *Q.d. de veritate*, q.,1, a.2: "Res naturalis inter duos intellectus constituta".

[58] *Aus dem Nachlaß der Achzigerjahre*, (Schlechta III) 555.

[59] *Collected Papers*, 6, 338.

is the postulate of the objectivity of nature"[60]. The natural sciences are only possible because nature has intelligibility and is accessible to man. Most scientists accept this as self-evident. Few are those who raise questions about it. It is the task of the metaphysician to do so[61]. This doctrine of the *veritas rerum* constitutes the essential difference between the realism of Aquinas and idealistically tinged philosophies. According to St. Thomas the human mind is subject to reality, discovers the truth of things and in doing so discovers something of God. Our intellect and things are related to one another.

In his day St. Thomas summed up these insights in the principle that everything is knowable to the extent that it possesses being[62]. It is not man who determines the meaning of things when he first perceives them, but they already possess a meaning, a content which is their essence[63]. Things are open to the intellect. The concept 'true', when used in this sense, expresses a property of being, namely that it is understandable and not absurd. We experience this fact in our dealings with reality and attribute 'true' to things as proper to them. This concept 'true' formally expresses this relation to our intellect, a relation we attach to things. So it is a thing of reason. But fundamentally it denotes the meaningfulness and knowability of all beings[64].

Because of its very nature being is knowable: the higher a thing is in the hierarchy of being, the more knowable it becomes. The human intellect, however, possesses a limited power of penetration and comprehension: due to the fact that the mind is adjusted and united to a body it is circumscribed by the horizon of its formal object, the quiddity of material things. Hence those things which have a higher mode of being than the level of the universal concepts abstracted by us from material beings, are knowable for us only in a vague and analogous manner. Likewise we have no precise knowledge of the essence of the various kinds of material things[65].

The knowability of beings is simply presupposed and accepted by us,

[60] *Le hasard et la nécessité*, Paris 1970, 32.

[61] Cf. R.B. Schmitz, *Veritas rerum. Sein-Wahrheit-Wort. Thomas von Aquin und die Lehre von der Wahrheit der Dinge*, Münster 1984; J. Pieper, *Von der Wahrheit der Dinge*, München 1957.

[62] *S.Th.* I 16, 3. Cf. *In I Sent.*, d.19,q.5, a.1: " unumquodque ita se habet ad veritatem sicut ad esse".

[63] Cf. G. Ladrille, "La conscience est-elle créatrice de la vérité?", in *La vérité. Actes du XII^e congrès des sociétés de philosophie de langue française*, Louvain-Paris 1964, 28-32.

[64] *Q.d. de ver.*, 1,4: "...nihil aliud est quam entitatem intellectui adaequatam". To indicate this ontological truth St. Thomas speaks repeatedly of the *veritas rerum*.

[65] *Q.d. de veritate*, q.10, a.1: "Rerum essentiae sunt nobis ignotae". See also *In I De anima*, lectio 1, n.15

as it is immediately experienced as such. Only later do we reflect about it and form the explicit judgment that things have a knowable essence. Hence St. Thomas writes that things cannot be known, if they are not knowable, but that the intellect nonetheless can know beings without knowing their knowability[66].

Truth in the human mind

We must now consider truth as it is in the human intellect, that is the *veritas logica*.—The senses and the intellect (on the level of its first operation) receive the contents of what they perceive as a gift from things but they do not produce it. The cognitive species which they receive (*species sensibilis; species intelligibilis*) are a likeness transmitted to the cognitive faculties and make the knowing subject enter into contact with what is outside him. The knowing subject goes beyond the limits of his own being to acquire the contents of other things; he "writes" as it were the entire world into his own being which in this way is enriched accidentally[67].

Therefore the human mind and things stand to each other in the relationship of the perfectible and that which gives perfection. Things can render the mind perfect because their actuality, which the intellect comes to know, is a certain light which comes from God[68]. The resemblance of the cognitive species to the thing (of which it is the species) is not a kind of primitive image, as some authors say. It is not a resemblance of a quantitative order and is quite different from a photograph. The cognitive species possesses and is—to a greater or lesser extent—the knowable contents of that which is known. The species is not a sort of "tending towards" or "reaching out for" the object known[69], but the presence of the thing in the knowing subject.

There is no cleft between the knowing subject and reality. However, a rather widespread view holds that "the thing" is unattainable and in the final analysis stands opposite of us as something inaccessible. For instance, Merleau-Ponty writes that that which constitutes the reality of a thing is precisely the fact that it withdraws itself from us. For this French philosopher the being-in-itself of the thing, its presence but also

[66] I 16, 3.

[67] See L.-M. Régis, *Epistemology*, 220.

[68] *Expositio in librum De causis*, prop.6, n.168: "Ipsa actualitas rei est quoddam lumen ipsius".

[69] This is contrary to what phenomenology holds and what became the theory of E. Schillebeeckx (*Openbaring en theologie*, Bilthoven 1954, 195).

its eternal absence are the two inseparable aspects of its transcendence[70]. In keeping with his conceptualism M. Guéroult asserts that the definition of the truth as the corrspondence of the thing with thought is purely nominal. We do not possess the thing itself, but only a concept which is a sort of image we form; we are never really sure of the similarity of our representation to the thing, but always presuppose it[71].

The resemblance of the cognitive species is on a level which far surpasses all quantitative likeness: because the thing communicates itself, our knowledge is identical with its knowable contents[72]. The cognitive species of fire is not the same as the material fire and is not at the level of concrete material things, but it is the self-communication of the thing in such a way that the cognitive species is nothing other than a communication of contents which determines the faculty of knowing. Hence the cognitive species does not even manifest itself as a likeness of the thing either, but we deduce its existence from the fact that we do have knowledge.

The knowledge of the senses and of the concept-forming intellect cannot but accept and represent reality. To this extent it is necessarily true[73]. But this truth is so to say the nature of the acts of knowledge themselves and so it is the truth of a particular being, in other words, it is ontological truth. We can, however, also reflect on this correspondence and confirm it, when we say: "This is so" or "Paul is sick". In these and similar cases we say something about facts and things, but we also know that they are as we say they are[74].

This known correspondence of the contents of our thinking with reality is called the *veritas logica*. In fact our word 'true' means in the first place this truth, that is, the ascertained correspondence of our thinking and speaking with reality. It is only in a derivative sense that we use the term 'true' to indicate that things have a knowable content and possess the properties which belong to that essence. They correspond to the idea of their kind (which, as we pointed out above, comes ultimately from God's thinking). The ontological truth of things is dependent on God's thinking: God knows the ideas of all things, that is the ways in which his being can be participated in by created things.

[70] *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 270.

[71] "La définition de la vérité", in *Actes du XII^e congrès...*, p.45.

[72] Cf. *In I Sent.*, d.19, q.5, a.1 and *S.C.G.* I, c. 59.

[73] This does not exclude that in the gradual elaboration of our knowledge subjective factors may have a certain influence. The description Aristotle and Thomas give of our knowledge concerns our immediate and spontaneous experience of the world.

[74] 16, 2: "Quando iudicat rem ita se habere sicut est forma quam de re apprehendit, tunc primo cognoscit et dicit veritatem".

The *veritas logica* is produced by the second operation of the intellect which is an affirmation or negation concerning reality. Its linguistic expression is the proposition, although not every proposition belongs to the second operation: some propositions are questions, wishes or commands which as such contain no affirmation or negation of reality.—In order to be true a judgment must be based on evidence. If we say: "Tomorrow a new war will break out", the statement possesses no logical truth, for we cannot know for certain whether the war will really start.

Since the *veritas logica* is the correpondence of a statement about reality with things as they really are, it is based on the being (*esse*) of things and not on their essence. Formally speaking the being of things is not their ontological truth, which is their essential content and knowability. For this reason Thomas writes the following almost paradoxical words: "The being of a thing and not its (ontological) truth is the cause of the truth of the intellect"[75]. The truth and certainty of our knowledge is based on being. Far from forgetting being, St. Thomas awards it a central position in our quest of truth.

Truth and goodness

As was shown in the deduction of the transcendentals, being in its relation to the will is good, as we call its relation to the intellect its truth[76]. This raises the question as to whether goodness precedes truth. The reply is negative for the following reasons:

(a) 'True' refers simply and immediately to being, whereas 'good' is consequent upon being inasmuch as it is perfect, since to that extent it is worth striving for. Its identification with being is less immediate.

(b) By its very nature knowledge precedes striving. 'True' refers to knowledge, 'good' to striving. Therefore 'true' is prior.

This answer does not preclude the fact that in a given order love may have the priority over knowledge. This is the case when our knowledge cannot really know its object which is on a higher level, as obtains in supernatural faith.

Does truth change?

A final question mentioned by St. Thomas in his treatise of truth in the

[75] I 16, 1 ad 3: "Esse rei, non veritas eius, causat veritatem intellectus"; *In I Sent.*,d.19, q.5, a.1: "Ratio veritatis fundatur in esse et non in quidditate". Cf. *De ver.* 1, 2ad 3.
[76] Cf. I 5, 3.

Summa theologiae[77] is whether truth can change. It sometimes happens that we change our view of a thing, reaching a better understanding or a more detailed knowledge. In such a case the thing remains the same, but our knowledge develops or changes. Sometimes we keep the same opinion but the thing to which it refers changes. If Socrates stands up, our judgment that he is sitting is no longer true. Therefore, the logical truth of the human intellect is changeable to the extent that the being on which it is based may change.—But true judgments about the essential properties of things are unchangeably true, at least for as long as these things exist[78]. The same applies to statements about the principles of being. Because the intellect conceives these truths at a given moment in time, this (logical) truth has a beginning and is not eternal. Only in God truth is present from all eternity[79].

[77] I 16, 8.
[78] *Q.d. de veritate*, q.1, a.6.
[79] *L.c.*, ad 4 & ad 6.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GOODNESS OF BEING

Classical metaphysics considers the proposition "every being is good" a fundamental insight of far reaching significance into the nature of being itself. However, in modern philosophy as well as in twentieth-century literature this principle is at times rejected. As we have explained in chapter three Kant views transcendental concepts as 'empty' terms[1]. He writes that "we cannot think of anything anywhere in the world nor outside the world which could be considered good without qualification, except for a man's good will"[2]. Perhaps influenced by this current of thought modern authors are somewhat critical of the axiom of the goodness of things and point, for example, to the reality of evil and suffering which can in no way be called good[3]. Precisely because of the existence of evil they express their surprise that even in our time the principle "every being is good", which dates from medieval times, is still defended.

In their view one should rather say that beings are potentially valuable to man and the axiom should be formulated as follows: "Every being can be a bearer of value"[4]. Other authors believe that things in themselves have no value but only receive a value when man is interested in them[5]. It is man who determines their value[6].—The views of Sartre and Camus are too well-known to pause long over them: the being-in-itself is viscous, obscure and opposes man who on each occasion must confront and deny it to determine the meaning he wants to give to things. Our basic experience of reality is that of its absurdity. Heidegger's view of the ontological goodness is similar to his view of truth: man finds no truth in things, but his discoveries constitute the truth. Thus man's existence (the *Dasein*) also projects goodness on to things[7]. Spinoza is an early

[1] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 114, 12.
[2] *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 29.
[3] Cf. J. Hessen, *Wertphilosophie* (1937), 45-58.
[4] See J. Hirschberger, "Omne ens est bonum", in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 1940, 292-305.
[5] R.B. Perry, *General Theory of Value*, New York 1926.
[6] Cf. E. Smith, *The Goodness of Things and its Contemporary Significance*, Washington D.C., 1947.
[7] Cf. *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, 76; A. de Waelhens, *La philosophie de Martin Heidegger*, 103.

voice in this choir of critics of the goodness of things. He asserts that a thing considered in itself cannot be called either good or bad, but only in relationship to something else. From different points of view the same thing can be good and bad at the same time[8].

The Greek philosophers on goodness

The concept of ontological goodness goes back to Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle defines the good as that which all things desire[9]. But the content of this well-known definition is already present in Plato's dialogues: "The good is that for the sake of which we must do everything else"[10]. Being imitated and loved by others is an essential characteristic of the good; being good means being desired. Plato made the perfection and the final causality of the good the very centre of his philosophy. In the *Republic* he calls the highest principle 'the Good'. All good things receive their goodness through participation in this principle, sc. the Idea of the Good[11].

Aristotle rejects Plato's theory of ideas and likewise a (simplistically conceived) univocal participation in the Good. Starting from the analysis of our use of terms he writes that "the term good is used in the category of substance, of quality, of relation; that which is *per se* is by nature prior to that which is relative... From this it follows that there can be no common idea above all these good things. Hence since 'good' has as many meanings as 'being', it cannot be something universally present in all cases (where it occurs) and simple"[12].

What Aristotle is saying here is that 'good' is found in various predicaments (substance, quantity, quality...), just as being is. It is not a univocal concept predicated in the same way of all good things. Although Aristotle says that goodness is found in the various categories of being, he does not explicitly state that every being is good.

In another important text we read: "That which is called complete (perfect) is (a) that outside of which you cannot find any, even one, of its parts; (b) that which in regard to its excellence and goodness cannot be surpassed in its own kind...; (c) the things which have attained their end, if this end is good, are called perfect"[13]. The importance of this text

[8] *Cogitata metaphysica* I, c.6.
[9] *Ethica Nicomachea* I, ch.1.
[10] *Gorgias* 499e; cf. *Philebus* 20d and *Gorgias* 488c.
[11] See *Timaeus* 30a: "God wanted all things to be good".
[12] *Eth.Nic.* 1096 a 18ff.
[13] *Metaph.* 1021 b 12ff.

lies in the connection which it establishes between being complete or perfect and goodness. Whenever things possess all they should have, i.e., when they are perfect, they are called good.

Plotinus connects Plato's doctrine of the supreme Good with Aristotle's definition of the good as that which all things desire. The Good itself is above things, but things are good by participating in the Good. In fact, things are good in a twofold manner: by being alike to the Good; by aiming their activity at the Good[14]. Plotinus holds that all things possess something of the Good because they have a certain degree of unity, exist and participate in form[15]. But somewhat further on in his treatise he seems to limit the significance of this statement when he says that only a life orientated to the the First Principle is good. In line with this he writes that the evil of matter is suppressed by form: the association of form with matter is the cause of goodness[16]. This insight probably led Avicenna to his definition of the good as "that which either simply or in a particular way possesses an undividedness of the form from matter".

Finally Plotinus considers the Good as active: "We see that of other things everything that attains its maturity brings forth something else. Fire heats, snow cools, medicines heal... How then could the Most Perfect, the First Good remain on its own?"[17]. Thus goodness is causality. Hence the well known principle: "The Good spreads itself" (*bonum est diffusivum sui*), which was of great importance in the Middle Ages and of which Thomas would indicate the (limited) validity[18]. Plotinus emphasizes that the supreme principle, the One, is good in a way very different from the goodness of what issues from it: it is good for other things which participate in it, but it itself is above goodness[19]. Whereas Aristotle makes desirability the essential characteristic of goodness, Plotinus gives priority to self-communication[20].

Following in the steps of Plato Proclus writes that the Good is the king of all things: it makes all things good just as the sun illuminates everything[21]. There are, Proclus says, three levels of being good: the good itself or the foremost good; the good through participation; the good to be acquired (which is mixed with its contrary)[22]. The Second Hypostasis, the *Noûs* and Being, are good through participation[23]. This view leads to the theory according to which things are good not by what they themselves are, but due to a form added to them, an opinion held by Boethius.

[14] *Enneads* I 7.
[15] I 7, 2, 2.
[16] VI 7, 28.
[17] V 4, 1, 23-29.
[18] The pinciple goes back to Plato. See the *Timaeus* 29 a.
[19] V 2, 2.
[20] See J. van de Wiele, "Het thema 'ens et bonum convertuntur': wording en philosophische betekenis", in *Tijdschrift voor philosophie* 26(1964) 186-253.
[21] *Theol.plat.* II 7, 101; *In Rempublicam* I 287, 10.

Theories of goodness in the Christian tradition

According to Dionysius no being is possible and real if it does not participate in the goodness and beauty of God[24]. God is super-goodness and so he communicates some of his goodness to his creatures. In God goodness is his being. Because he is good himself he gives goodness to things outside him. In consequence all things strive to approach God's goodness[25].

Boethius argues that only God is good by his essence; other things are good because they proceed from him[26]. Nonetheless Boethius confirms the ontological goodness of all things: "The things that are are good; ...everything that exists strives for the good"[27]. The reason why things are good is not their essence, but their dependence on God's goodness. They are accordingly not good neither through their own esssence nor through participation, but rather because of the fact that they strive towards God.

Thomas criticises this position: Boethius has an incorrect view of participation, as he sees it as a kind of composition in the manner of a subject which participates in an accident. According to this view both forms (that which is participated in and the participating form) remain outside one another. Thomas points out that there is another way in which something can be said of something else. In the sentence "man is a living being endowed with the senses", both forms (being a man and that of a living being endowed with the senses) penetrate one another. Accordingly we must say that "possessing something *per se* " is used in different ways: it may refer to a part of the essence but also to a property resulting from the essence. When we say that man is ontologically good,

[22] *In Timaeum* 363, 11-18.
[23] *O.c.*, 365, 12.
[24] *De divinis nominibus*, 820A-C; 980A-C.
[25] *Ibid.*, 724A; 593CD.—St. Bonaventure refers to Dionysius for the principle "ens et bonum convertuntur" (*In I Sent.*, d.1, a.1, 9: Quar. I 32), although in Dionysius'opinion 'good' is more encompassing than being.
[26] *De hebdomadibus* 1313A.
[27] 1313A.

we intend to say that man is good *per se* but that 'good' is nonetheless predicated of him as something in which he participates. Of course we can speak of the goodness of things to the extent that these are dependent on God, the First Good. But we must definitively call things good in an absolute sense because of the fact that they themselves exist and operate[28].

From the early beginnings of the Church Christian thinkers held without hesitation that everything that exists is good. Against Celsus Origen affirms emphatically that for Christians the only real evil is that in the human will and its actions; there is no other evil[29]. In support of this claim he quotes *1 Tim.* 4, 4-5 where St. Paul writes that every creature of God is good[30]. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* Origen argues that "God is good. Hence the Good (One) is the same as the One who is"[31].

The Greek Fathers also assert in a striking manner that, as the first pages of the Bible say, all things are good because God made them. The Latin Fathers hold the same[32]. St. Augustine writes that even that which is perishable is good: if there were nothing good in it, it would be unable to perish. Therefore, we must accept that as long as perishable things exist, they are good (*quamdiu sunt, bona sunt*)[33]. Around the year 405 Augustine writes: "Each thing is good inasmuch as it is; each thing can only come from the highest and true God" [34]. "Every mode, every form, every design (*modus, species, ordo*) which determine the goodness of things comes from God. To the extent that a thing possesses a nature of its own, it cannot be evil" [35].—These quotations make it clear to which degree divine revelation has been decisive in the shaping of the doctrine of the goodness of things in Christian thought.

The great metaphysician Avicenna views the good as perfection, sc. the being which has been brought to actuality. The Neo-platonic strain of his philosophy becomes clear from his theory that evil consists in being in potency to something[36]. William of Auxerre saw no possibility

[28] *Expositio in Boetii De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 3, nn.44-55.
[29] *Contra Celsum* IV 66.
[30] *O.c.*, VIII 32.
[31] II 13, 96.
[32] See, for instance, Ambrose, *De Isaac et anima: PL* 14, 525.
[33] *Confessiones* VII 12, 18.
[34] *De natura boni contra Manichaeos*, c.1
[35] *O.c.*, ch.17.
[36] *Metaphysica* IV, c.2 (*Prima philosophia* (Van Riet), 212: "Ubi autem fuerit malum, ibi est aliquid in potentia aliquo modo...; (res) non est mala nisi inquantum ipsa est privatio perfectionis".

of solving Boethius' dilemma and denied that any created thing can be good due to its own essence: things are good because they possess goodness as something added to them. This goodness is an imitation of or leads to the First Goodness[37].

Philip the Chancellor gives three definitions of the good: (a) a thing in which act and potency are not separate is good; (b) the good spreads itself or multiplies being; (c) the good is desired by all[38]. The first two definitions show Neoplatonic influences, while the last one is based on Aristotle's description of the good. Averroes, on the other hand, emphasizes that the good means perfection: something is good if it has attained perfection and nothing can be added to it. God's goodness is the ultimate and highest perfection.

This brings us to Albert the Great. Albert frequently pondered the question of the goodness of things. In his treatise *De natura boni* he gives three definitions of the good: (a) good is that which all things desire. The things which strive for the good are good due to their desire; (b) the absence of division between act and potency makes that a thing is good (Albert attributes this definition to Avicenna); (c) the act which we grasp with joy is good (this definition is attributed to Algazel). —For Albert goodness is in the first place the object of striving. He then defines the good as that which spreads itself[39].

In his work *De bono*, tract.1, Albert returns to the question and asks whether in statements the terms being and good are convertible. He first gives a number of objections from Aristotle and the *Liber causarum* (sic) which show that being precedes the good. In the *Sed contra*-arguments he quotes proofs to the contrary, taken from Dionysius, Augustine and Boethius. Finally in his *solutio* Albert states that in a sense 'good' comes after being, since the concept of being is prior, but that in another sense goodness precedes since God's goodness is prior to creation. Finally he writes that in yet another sense, namely in existing things to which both are attributed, the terms are convertible (*bonum et ens convertuntur*).— Apparently Albert treats the question on various levels. In his *Summa theologiae* Thomas draws a clearer distinction between these levels and speaks first about the good as we know it with our natural reason, and after that raises the question of God's goodness and his causality with regard to created things.

[37] *Summa aurea*, III 11, f.126ra.
[38] See H. Pouillon, *o.c.* (ch.1), 44ff. Cf. *Tractatus Magistri Guilielmi Alvernensis De bono et malo* (edit. J.R. O'Donnell), VI 253.
[39] Quoted after J. Schneider, *Das Gute und die Liebe nach der Lehre Alberts des Großen*, Paderborn 1967, 35-36.

In the seventh article of his treatise Albert investigates whether everything that exists, is good because it is. He gives Boethius' reply but calls it incomplete and unclear. Boethius' presupposition is incorrect: the form being cannot be said to be simply identical with goodness, for the contents of both concepts are different, although they coincide in the existing thing because both the being of this existing thing and its goodness are related to God, respectively as its efficient and final cause. Goodness necessarily follows on being and cannot be separated from it.

In his *Commentary on the De divinis nominibus* Albert deals with the question of whether being really comes after the good as Dionysius claims it does. He proposes this solution: on the level of our concepts being is prior to the good, but because we first come to know God through his works, God's goodness is known to us first. God's goodness embraces everything, including all causes, for the simple reason that it is the goal of everything[40]. Somewhat earlier in the same commentary the illuminating text occurs which states that the good adds nothing real to being but only a new mode of signifying. Hence the goodness of a thing is its essence and the same is true for its truth and unity. Goodness means the essence under a different concept[41]. St. Albert takes a major step towards solving the problem of the ontological goodness of things, but he nonetheless remains trapped in a Neoplatonic framework of thought: everything that is comes from the Good, is in the Good and is directed towards the Good. —But in his *Summa theologica* he returns once more to Aristotle and calls that which all things desire good. He now rejects Avicenna's definition (*bonum est indivisio actus a potentia*), since a thing is good only because of its ultimate perfection and not just because of any form[42].

Thomas Aquinas on the goodness of being

Before dealing with God's goodness in his *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas first determines what exactly goodness is, what its essence is and in what it differs from being[43]. A text from Augustine, namely "we are good to the extent that we are", serves as a beacon in the analysis[44].

The *ratio boni*, i.e. the essence, the content of the concept of the good, consists in the fact that the thing of which the term good is predicated,

[40] *In De div.nominibus* 4, 57.
[41] *O.c.*, 4, 5.
[42] Liber I, Tract. VI, q.26, membrum 1, a.2, part. 2 ad 1.
[43] I 5, 1.
[44] The text is from the *De doctrina christiana* I 42.

is desired. Indeed, Aristotle says that good is that which all things strive for. A simple reflection shows how correct this definition is: all strivings and desires seek a good. Hence one may say that the good works like a sort of magnet on all existing things; it is the end they try to reach, it is the object of love in all its forms. While Plato conceived the good as one unified and univocal supreme entity and principle (the Idea of the Good), Aristotle pointed out that the good is manyfold as it is found in the different categories of being. Although his observations on and critique of Plato's position are correct, they could easily be understood as destructive of this magnificent doctrinal synthesis of the Good as the centre and sun of all things. Thomas is going to integrate the sober and solid analysis of Aristotle into an entirely new metaphysics of creation and participation to recuperate and transpose the valuable elements of Plato's theory of the Good[45].

It is evident that a thing is desirable to the extent that it is perfect, since all things strive for perfection. Now everything is perfect to the extent that it has been brought to reality (*in quantum est actu*). Hence a thing is good to the extent that it is being. Being is the reality of each thing and gives it its most profound determination, viz. that of being real. Hence it is clear that good and being are the same in things. But good expresses desirability, —something which being does not express.

Thomas points out that a thing cannot simply be said to be good in the same way as it is called being. Being is said in the first place of the substantial being of things, and only secondarily, in a more limited sense, of the accidental being, which is added to a substance. But because goodness of its nature implies perfection it is attributable most of all to that by means of which a thing attains its perfection. Now this occurs more through accidental determinations such as health, development of the mental faculties, knowledge and virtues; being the end desired by other things also ranks high in what we call being perfect. Perfection presupposes unity: the more unified something is, the more perfect it becomes. This means that the good is not just the static possession of one's ontological content and perfection, it is also that which is still to be attained. Creatures and in particular man must further develop and perfect themselves. In this way the good also shows the character of a fullness of being still to be reached.

The thesis that every being is good casts light on the particular nature of metaphysics. At the level of daily life it is far from being the case that

[45] On Aquinas' transposition of the theory of participation see below the chapter on participation.

all things are good for us, in the sense of things desired or loved by us. But the metaphysician has a different approach and looks beyond the immediate goodness for us at this particular moment; he does not remain fixed on a particular class of good things. He considers beings for what they are and is convinced that each being possesses its own content and perfection, on the basis of which it deserves to be valued and loved. God's creative love gives this content and value to things.

Aquinas next raises the question as to whether our knowledge of the good precedes our knowledge of being: being is the first concept we form. It is the most proper object of the intellect and hence the content of being precedes that of the good[46]. This answer implies the rejection of the Neoplatonic thesis of the priority of the good over being. However, St. Thomas does concede that in a limited sense and from a particular point of view the good may precede being, namely in the area of causality[47]. The good is also in a certain sense desired by that which is still in potency; in this sense we can say that it extends itself even to that which is not yet altogether being.

Thomas demonstrates as follows that every being is good inasmuch as it is being: "For every being, inasmuch as it is being, has actuality and is perfect in one way or another. For every act is a certain perfection. Now, as is apparent from what was stated above, the really perfect is desirable and good in its content. Hence every being as such is good"[48]. In his answer to the objections Aquinas makes the following observations: 'good' does not add a particular thing to being, but merely expresses the character of desirability which follows from the nature of being. Accordingly no being as such is evil. It can only be called so, if it lacks something. With regard to primary matter Aquinas observes that it is only potentially good. —Finally, mathematical essences fall outside the order of final causality and are not desirable.—The text from Scripture which serves as a basis for the theological affirmation of the goodness of things is *1 Tim.* 4, 4: "Every creature of God is good".

In his doctrine of the truth and goodness of beings St. Thomas confirms that being of itself goes toward man and gives itself to him;

[46] We acquire the concept of 'good' from our experience of things and actions which agree with our inclinations.

[47] I 5, 2: "Bonum autem cum habeat rationem appetibilis, importat habitudinem causae finalis, cuius causalitas prima est, quia agens non agit nisi propter finem et ab agente materia movetur ad formam".

[48] I 5, 3.

man's nature is such as to impel him to accept and to love being[49]. The good is a final cause because it is desirable. However, he adds that in the person who acts, the final cause acts first, but in things which become, the good is reached only at the end of this process of becoming.

The principle "bonum est diffusivum sui"

The principle that the good spreads itself must be understood exclusively of final causality. Likewise Augustine's words "Because God is good, we exist"[50] must be interpreted as referring to the final causality of God's will. Thomas rejects the explanation of the above mentioned principle through efficient or, a fortiori, mechanic causality. On the level of efficient causality the good is not active, for it is in the nature of the good to perfect other things in the manner of the end[51]. Needless to say that Aquinas does not deny that good things also act as efficient causes. He confirms it in numerous texts[52]. But this does not imply that the good as such is an efficient cause. The Platonic principle of the good spreading itself tends to reduce the causality of the good to a necessary natural activity, just as for Neoplatonic philosophers the emanation of the hypostases is indeed a necessary process which they illustrate by the image of a gushing well or a source radiating light[53].

The companions of goodness

In a following article of his treatise on the good in the *Summa theologiae* St. Thomas inquires, on the basis of a text from Augustine[54], whether the content of the concept of good consists in mode, shape and ordering (*modo, specie, ordine*). He explains his positive reply as follows: in order to be good a thing must be perfect. Now it acquires this character of perfection through its form. In order to determine a thing a form must be applied to that which is to be determined. This need for adaptation is

[49] I 78, 1:"Res nata...animae coniungi et in anima esse"; *Q.d. de ver.* I, 1:"...anima nata convenire cum omni ente".

[50] *De doctrina christiana*, I 31.

[51] *De veritate* 21, 2.

[52] I 45, 5: "Unumquodque tunc perfectum est quando potest sibi simile facere"; I 62, 9 ad 2: "Diffundere perfectionem habitam in alio hoc est de ratione perfecti inquantum est perfectum"; I 103, 6: "Major perfectio est quod aliquid...etiam aliis sit causa bonitatis"; *S.C.G.* I, c.37: "Communicatio esse et bonitatis ex bonitate proveniens..."

[53] Cf. D. Schlüter, "Der Wille und das Gute bei Thomas von Aquin", in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* (1971) 88-136.

[54] *De natura boni*, c.3.

expressed by the term *modus*. The form itself is denoted by the term *species* , because a form constitutes a thing in its kind. The inclination towards the good follows from the form and is represented by the term *ordo*. In this text Thomas clarifies what may be called 'the immediate surroundings' of the good: the preparation for the good by means of the preparation of the receiving subject and the "adaptation" of the efficient cause; the formal content of the good which realizes itself differently in each case, and the resulting striving toward the goal of the good thing once it is constituted. In this way Aquinas leaves behind a static view of the good and sees the good in development, in its specific riches and in the striving which characterizes all things.

A division of goodness

In the last article of this question Thomas considers the traditional division of the good into the morally good, the useful and the pleasant (*bonum honestum, bonum utile, bonum delectabile*). This division goes back to Aristotle who writes that our choice is determined by three things, namely the good, the useful and the pleasurable[55]. In conformity with this division Aristotle also distinguishes between three kinds of friendship: friendship based on considerations of utility; friendship based on pleasure and finally noble, perfect friendship based on mutual assistance toward moral progress[56].

This division was taken over by later authors. Cicero notes that there need not be a contradiction between the morally good and that which is useful or pleasant[57]. Ambrose adopts it in his *De officiis ministrorum* and in this way it came to play an important role in medieval moral theology. Thomas observes that this division is applicable in the first place to human actions but that, when it is seen from a higher standpoint, it also concerns the ontologically good. This is explained as follows: The good is the goal of desire, thus of movement. The means by which one arrives at the good one desires is the *bonum utile* ; the good which is the final goal is the *bonum honestum*, while this same final goal is also a *bonum delectabile* to the extent that we enjoy it in quiet possession. Thus there

[55] *Eth.Nic.* 1103 b 30ff.; see also *Top.* 105 a 27. The division may have been inspired by the Pythagorean view of the three different ends of human life people choose: wisdom or honour; profit; pleasure (exemplified by the competing athletes, the vendors, the general public at the Olympic Games).

[56] *Eth.Nic.* VIII, ch.3.

[57] *De officiis*, III.

appear to be gradations in goodness: the genuine good is the *bonum honestum*, the useful is good to a lesser extent and analogically, and likewise also the pleasant.—By showing that this division is applicable not merely to the moral good in human actions, but also to the ontological good, Thomas indicates that the moral order is related to the ontological order.

The cause of the goodness of being

Finally the question must be answered whether all things are good due to God's goodness. In Plato's philosophy the answer is plainly affirmative. Aristotle, however, sharply rejected the theory of a univocal participation in a supreme Idea of the Good. Thomas makes a distinction: Plato's doctrine of ideas which postulated that the essences of things exist outside those things must be rejected: things are their own essence. But on the other hand, it is absolutely true (*absolute verum est*) that there is a First Being which is being and good through its essence and which we call God[58]. Aristotle also holds this, says St. Thomas. Every being receives its being and goodness from this First Being, which is being and good through its own essence. All things participate in the First Being in the manner of a remote likeness which is given to them by God as efficient cause. In this way everything is good due to God's goodness.

After this strong affirmation of the doctrine of participation St. Thomas points out that things possess their own goodness because their likeness to God's goodness is present in them as their very being and must be called formally their own goodness.

In this sense one may speak of the many "goodnesses" of created things, while in another sense there is only one goodness.

At the end of the previous chapter we spoke of the priority of truth with regard to goodness. This priority is based on what 'true' as such means, sc. the knowable essential contents of things, which are basic to the perfection signified by 'good'. But if we now consider the terms under the aspect of things that must reach further perfection, goodness is prior: for truth is only perceived and acquired by those beings which possess intellect and are gifted with intellectual knowledge. But goodness perfects whatever receives a perfection, even material things.[59]

[58] I 6, 4. Aquinas refers to the Five Ways (I 2, 3). On these proofs and their importance see our *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Leyden 1990, ch. 3.

[59] I 5, 2; *De veritate*, q.21, a.3.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EVIL

'Evil'is the opposite of 'good'. Accordingly a thing which lacks its perfection will be evil. St. Thomas defines evil as a privation of something which a being should have. This definition does not derive from Greek thought. Although Aristotle treats of the various forms of privation (στέρησις), he does not develop a specific doctrine of evil as a privation. "A being is deprived of something, he writes, whenever it does not possess a quality which it should possess by nature. Thus a man who is blind is deprived of the faculty of sight in a totally different manner to a mole: for the mole this privation is in contrast to generic animal nature; for man, on the other hand, it is in contrast to his own normal nature. Accordingly, a privation exists whenever a being, which by nature and at a given time should possess an attribute, does not have it. Blindness is, indeed, a privation, but we do not say that a being is blind at every age, but only if it does not possess the faculty of sight at the age at which it normally should do so"[1].

Evil and its cause according to Plato and later Platonists

According to Aristotle a privation is always in a subject. But in the Platonic tradition privation is seen as something subsistent and is identified with matter. However, the interpretation of Plato's theory of evil is beset with difficulties. The main issue under dispute is whether matter or soul is the cause of evil. F. Cornford, H. Cherniss *et alii* make soul responsible for disorder in the universe, but E. Zeller, A.J. Festugière, G. Vlastos, S. Pétrement and others consider matter to be the ultimate cause of evil. Their interpretation is confirmed by Aristotle[2]. It would, indeed, seem that the dominant view in Plato's later dialogues is that there is a fundamental and primary cause of evil, sc. of disorder. Souls are possible causes of secondary forms of disorder.

[1] *Metaph.* V, ch.22.

[2] *Metaph.* 988 a 14ff. On the question of the cause of evil according to Plato see Fritz-Peter Hager, "Die Materie und das Böse im Antiken Platonismus", in *Museum Helveticum* 19(1962) 73-103. Mr. Hager's study gives an excellent survey of some of the most important publications on this subject. We also mention A.-J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès trismégiste*, III, Paris 1953, XII-XIV and S. Pétrement, *Le dualisme chez Platon et les manichéens*, Paris 1947.

This rather dualistic view is also found in Plotinus. Matter is the primary evil. Since bodies are material, they are characterised by a form of derived evil. Evil enters the soul, inasmuch as the latter is not attentive to the good. If it is not, lack of discipline and of right measure result. The soul becomes bad when it turns to matter.[3] What has no share whatsoever in the good is entirely evil, viz. matter itself. Plotinus tried to avoid dualism (which follows from his position on good and evil) by considering matter as relative not-being.[4] Evil is not a principle of the same rank as the good: it somehow exists within the territory of the good. As R.T. Wallis points out, Plotinus combines two contrasting views of matter. One the one hand, matter is absolute evil, yet it is not a principle which exists independently, but it is the outermost limit of emanation, at the point where emanation loses itself. Thus matter is not a positive force, but "utter sterility or poverty which communicates its own deficiency to the bodies based on it and this becomes the source of all the sensible world's imperfections, including as we shall see, the wickedness of individual souls".[5] The ultimate cause of evil is not soul but matter. There is no sin in a soul free from the body.[6] In a sense though one could say that matter as such is not yet actual evil, but it becomes so in the souls which are united to it.

Proclus, on the other hand accepts a plurality of causes of evil (whereas each of the classes of the good has only one cause).[7] Matter as such is not yet evil. The world even needs matter[8] which comes from God. Evil is privation. Likewise Simplicius argues that matter as such is not evil but is required for the goodness and perfection of the world.[9] But in the emanation of being that which comes later is deprived of part of its goodness. Pure evil, Proclus says, is nothingness; it is below being as the Good is above being. There is evil in those souls which descend and lose their clarity: they are filled with oblivion and get lost in trivial things. —Proclus considers matter a direct product of emanation, and is

[3] *Enneads* I 8, 3 and 4.

[4] I 8, 3, 2.

[5] R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, London 1972, 49-50. See *Enneads* I 8, 3 and 4. Plotinus' position is ambiguous as was that of Plato. For this reason, some authors argued that for Plotinus matter is not evil in itself and that an intrinsically evil reality has no place in the series of emanations flowing forth from the One (D. O'Brien, "Plotinus on Evil", in *Le néoplatonisme. Colloque de Royaumont 1969*, 113-146. But O'Brien was contradicted by H.-R. Schwyzer in *Zetesis. Festschrift E. De Strycker*, (1973) 266-280 and by J.M. Rist, in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*, Accademia dei Lincei (1974), 495-504.

[6] I 8, 4 and 5.

[7] *De malorum subsistentia* 17, 47 (Boese).

[8] *In Rempublicam* (Kroll), II 375, 24-376, 6.

[9] *In Physicam*, 249, 26.

more of a monist than Plotinus. His remarkable view of evil as a privation may be due to the influence of Christian authors, as is suggested by a careful study of the texts of the Fathers chronologically prior to Proclus.

Christians reflect on the problem of evil

According to the Christian faith God created the world out of nothing. The things made by God are good and there is no eternally existing factor of evil. Furthermore, no single being as such is evil. Consequently Christian thinkers view evil as something negative. Origen writes expressly that evil is opposed to good as not-being to being. God is Being and the Good; hence the wicked and the evil are non-beings.[10] It is certain that being evil means that a thing lacks what is good.[11] How to explain the presence of evil, if God is good? If God does not remove all evil, the reason is that he foresees that later good will come of it for others.[12]

St. Methodius sees himself confronted by the following dilemma: either God is the Creator of all things and hence also of evil, or it is necessary to hold with the Gnostics that evil proceeds from eternal matter for which God is not responsible. In the first case, God would not be good, and in the second not absolute. Hence we cannot but conclude that evil is not a substance (*ousia*). A text from St. Athanasius contains the same line of thought: "Some Greek thinkers erred from the right path, and because they do not know Christ they have asserted that evil exists as a substance. Once given this they have gone wrong in two ways: either they have denied that the Demiurge is the cause of all things (indeed he could not be the Lord of all, if evil were a substance in itself, as they claim), or else, in order to be able to say that he is the cause of all things, they were driven necessarily to concede that he was also the cause of evil".[13]

St. Basil warns in a sermon: "Do not suppose that God is the cause of the existence of evil, or that evil has an existence of its own. Depravity does not exist as if it were something alive. One must never imagine its essence as something really existing. For evil is the privation of the good.[14] St. Gregory of Nyssa in his turn confirms that God is not the cause of evil: he is the Author of what is, not of what is not.[15]

[10] *In Ioann.* II 13, 96.
[11] *De principiis* II 9, 2, 166.
[12] *De libero arbitrio: PG* XVIII 256; *Comment. in epist.ad Rom.* VIII 13.
[13] *Oratio contra gentes*, 6: *PG* 25, 12.
[14] *PG* 31, 341.
[15] *Oratio cat.* : *PG* 64, 28ff.

Apparently these bishops considered this doctrine of evil of such importance that they included it in their catechesis of the people[16]. St. Ambrose writes: "What is evil other than a lack of goodness (*indigentia boni*)? Only those things lacking the good, are evil (*quae privantur bonis*) ...Evil can be understood by knowing the good".[17] He confirms that evil is not a living substance but a perversion of the mind.[18] Here we see clearly the distance which separates Christian thinkers from Plotinus, according to whom the Good necessarily brings forth evil which comes from matter.

Augustine writes in his *Confessiones* that at first he did not know that evil is the privation of a good and that in this way he parted with the path of truth.[19] But then he came to understand that evil is not a thing and that the term merely means the privation of the good.[20] Before his conversion Augustine shared some Manichaean theories, but later he developed the doctrine of evil with great clarity. For Dionysius too evil consists in a disturbance of the order willed by God.[21]

On the basis of these testimonies we conclude that even if the doctrine of evil as a privation was prepared by some texts from Aristotle and is not beyond the range of natural reason, it is specifically Christian. Thomas formulates it as follows: "The removal of the good, understood in a negative manner, is not what makes up evil...But the removal of the good in the manner of privation is called evil".[22]

The different kinds of evil

Thus far we have spoken of evil in general as a transcendental term, that is we considered evil as such without viewing particular forms of evil; but one can also study evil as it occurs concretely and divide it into the following classes: evil in nature (*malum naturale*), evil in human work (*malum artificiale)* and moral evil in human actions (*malum morale*). In these instances evil is always the privation of a good in a subject.

[16] See H.-I. Marrou, "Un ange déchu, un ange pourtant...", in *Satan. Etudes carmélitaines* (1948) 40.
[17] *De Isaac et anima*, c.7: *PL* XIV 525.
[18] *Hexaemeron*, c.8.
[19] *Conf.* 3, 7: "Quia non noveram malum non esse nisi privationem boni usque ad quod omnino non est".
[20] *De civ.Dei*, 11, 22. See R. Jolivet, *Le problème du mal d'après S. Augustin*, Paris 1936.
[21] *De div. nom.* 732D and R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, Paris 1954, 39.
[22] Formally speaking evil is the privation of a determinate good in a determinate being. Cf. I 5, 3 ad 2; 5, 5 ad 3.

Leibniz speaks of a further kind of evil, namely metaphysical evil: the world consists of things in various gradations of being. An animal, for instance, lacks the higher perfection which is the capacity to think characteristic of man. This lower degree of perfection is a metaphysical evil. —However, this theory must be rejected since a being on a lower level is perfect in its kind and deprived of nothing.[23]

The three kinds of evil:

(a) Evil in natural things. The privation of a perfection which is called evil, can either be a privation of the substantial being of things[24] or the privation of their accidental perfection, or finally the privation of their utility to man. In nature decay and perishing, malformations and shortcomings occur. In many cases these kinds of evil are useful in the context of the whole world: animals and plants die to make way for fresh individuals and so to make adaptation and development possible.[25] Life renews itself in each generation. In regard to this kind of evil in nature we may not simply apply our human manner of appreciating things and speak of cruelty if one animal serves as food for another. —Even accidental malformations are not devoid of meaning in nature, but are frequently the best possible form of life which a part of an organism can attain under given circumstances. Nature avoids squandering and a thing that no longer corresponds to its end on a higher level will frequently still have a degree of usefulness on a lower level and be situated in a lower order of finality. Furthermore, certain forces of nature are sometimes deprived of their usefulness for a particular group of people as is the case with hurricanes, flooding and earthquakes. Considered on a global scale these natural disasters do have a purpose: for instance, earthquakes are a by-product of tectonic movements, such as orogeny which is necessary if there are to be erosion, rivers and fertile land. Hurricanes function in the system of energy exchange and temperature regulation of ocean water at different latitudes.

Pain and suffering may also be classed under the forms of evil in nature. In cases where they are caused by man himself they belong to

[23] *Theodicea*, § 33. St. John Chrysostom pointed out that when of two things one is better, the other does not become bad (*De non iterando coniugio*, I: *PG* 48, 613.

[24] In such cases the privation lies in the absence of a particular individual thing (or of a species) from its environment. The extinction of certain species is an evil, as is the disappearance of a beautiful old tree in our yard.

[25] In I 48, 2 St. Thomas argues that the perfection of the universe requires that there be different degrees of goodness. There must also be things which are perishable and can lose their goodness.

categories (b) or (c) of this enumeration.—After in higher animals the nervous system and the brain had developed, pain and suffering became possible: pain is the perception by the sense of touch and the common sense of something which does violence to the organism. Suffering is the perception of a state of pain which lasts for longer. Suffering can become more intense the higher one's level of consciousness is. Animals suffer pain from moment to moment without actually knowing explicitly that this pain is contrary to their nature. In man suffering attains an entirely new depth: he experiences its continuity and is aware that this pain hinders him in his quest of happiness. Pain is doubtless one of the most day-to-day experiences and it affects all men. In a certain sense pain is more real to us than joy because it is present in our consciousness in a more biting manner. In former times people accepted pain more easily as something inevitable in life. But modern man is inclined to think that pain has no right to vex or cruciate him. When he himself suffers or when he sees others suffer, he adopts the attitude described by Albert Camus in his *L'homme révolté*.

Pain is a biting sensation of discomfort and disturbed order. Pain can be a sign or warning of danger and force the organism to rest so that it can organize all its forces toward curing itself. At times pain has a stimulating effect. Repeatedly, however, there exists a disproportion between the possible function of pain and its intensity. The disturbance of order we call evil apparently also occurs in pain to the extent that the latter shows a reduced purposiveness. However, it is also possible that in those cases in which a clear disproportion exists between the disease and the intensity of the pain, we are dealing with the so-called civilization diseases in which a natural equilibrium has been disturbed. But here too pain may promote some good in a different order: it is an incentive to discover and develop effective medication and may have a good influence on man's spiritual and moral life.

Mental suffering is not as easy to describe as physical pain: it embraces feelings of dissatisfaction, failure, anxiety, loneliness, guilt and painful loss. Mental affliction is the experience of being thwarted in our drive for rest, respect, success or of seeing the values we cherish most, endangered or in the process of disappearing.

(b) By evil in human work we mean a task carried out or work done in a defective way. Examples are a faulty argument, a badly constructed building, a text full of grammatical mistakes, a machine which is defective. In all these cases a task has been performed in a faulty manner. This is caused by insufficient talent, skill or application, —or sometimes

by the use of wrong materials, indisposition of the worker, etc. At times such actions are also a moral evil, sc. if the faulty performance could and should have been avoided. The evil in work carried out by man consists generally in the absence of a necessary accidental quality or ordering or, at times, of beauty, and in lack of usefulness for man.

(c) A action is *morally* evil whenever man knowingly and freely deviates from what he is obliged to do as a human being. What man must do is contained, explicitly and implicitly, in the fundamental statements of the practical intellect which tells him that the good must be done and evil avoided. The practical intellect deduces rules of conduct from the basic inclinations issuing from human nature and applies them to daily life in society. Moral evil, which we call sin, is not an infection from the outside, but the choice and adoption of a particular stand in conflict with the end of man.[26] Sin can be divided according to the various inclinations of man and is on each occasion opposed to the respective moral virtues which cover the whole field of human actions.

Moral evil is the most total form of evil, because it deprives man of his perfection as man and is a conscious free choice of evil (under the form of a limited good which stands in separation from man's duties). Thus sin goes against the love of God for man and against the order he established. Hence it is in conflict with God's goodness itself. Moral evil, which is studied in ethics, is responsible for a large part of the suffering in human life.

Differing metaphysical views of evil

When confronted by evil man can adopt various metaphysical attitudes.

(a) A first possible attitude is that of pessimism. Even in Greek thought which was generally optimistic, we do at times hear pessimistic voices. A statement quoted by Aristotle in the *Eudemus* says that it is best for man not to be born; having been born, it is best for him to die as soon as possible. In ancient India pessimistic currents of thought exercised considerable influence. Perhaps influenced by the *Vedanta* Buddha taught the four basic truths regarding suffering: suffering holds the upper hand in the world; the cause of suffering is "thirst", i.e. desire; putting an end to all desires will bring freedom from suffering; the way to achieve the extinction of desire is renunciation and a virtuous life which turns one in upon oneself. —The Christian philosopher cannot follow

[26] Cf. *In VI Ethic.*, l.4, n.1170. See also St. Basil, *Hexaemeron*, Hom.2, 16D.

Buddha in his assertion that everything is suffering and also emphatically rejects that all desire is the cause of suffering: desire is the condition for progress and perfection.[27]

(b) A second attitude towards the problem of suffering is that of the Stoics: pain is indeed a reality, but it is neither good nor evil, and hence we should ignore it. Man's true essence is not his body and even less his next of kin or his possessions. There is accordingly no reason whatsoever to suffer because of these things. Even if we lose everything, our mind still belongs to us.—The Stoic view of suffering can lead to a certain heroism but must nonetheless be rejected. Suffering is not something indifferent and we cannot separate soul and body in the manner the Stoics do. Finally, it is man's greatness to be profoundly moved by the misery of others and to suffer with them rather than to be indifferent to their plight and misery.

(c) A third attitude is that of naive optimism. It is true that there is suffering in the world, the optimist says, but this is only temporary. Man will be able to banish it through increased medical expertise, social assistance and greater prosperity. Poverty and inequality can be overcome, natural disasters predicted and avoided; the human life-span is susceptible of prolongation. —We call this position naive optimism. Some progress is certainly possible but it seems to be accompanied by new forms of evil. It is impossible to banish all suffering from human life without turning man into a robot.

(d) Apparently the correct attitude towards the problem of evil is more complex. It recognizes that there is much evil in the world, but it assumes that ultimately the good will triumph over evil, even though this will not come about in the present order of our world. This assumption is based on the metaphysics of creation: if God creates out of love, he will see to it that evil is a road towards the good. Else his power would be insufficient and he would fall short of his own goodness.[28]

A second observation is that in the study of evil we must always keep the whole in view rather then consider individual occurrences of evil. A simple example is the pain involved in child-birth: to the mother it may seem absurd that she suffers pain when she gives birth, but in the context of the mother-child relationship this pain has a particular function. As a

[27] See St. Augustine, *In epist. primam Ioannis*, tr.4 (*PL* 35, 2008): "Tota vita christiani boni sanctum desiderium est...; desiderando extendit animam, extendendo facit capacem. Desideremus ergo fratres quia implendi sumus".

[28] This point is not demonstrated here. We must refer the reader to our *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Leiden 1990.

matter of fact, man is part of society and he never suffers or dies for himself alone. Somehow tragic events have a function in the human community.

Dostoievski points this out in his *The Brothers Karamazov*. The central question in this book is that of justifying the suffering of innocent children. Dostoievski replies not so much by means of a rational analysis, but by bringing on stage the figure of Zozime. Zozime suffers due to others, with others, for others. In his love for all men even suffering takes on a meaning. Throughout the ages man has sensed the value of this kind of suffering: saints and mystics offered up their hardships and pains, soldiers died for their country and parents sufferd for the sake of their children. They felt that this was not in vain. While suffering they grew spiritually. Suffering brings into being a new dimension in man and provides greater self-knowledge and a more profound experience of reality. Aeschylus expressed this in the words: "Through suffering one learns". Suffering destroys false certitudes and pride, leads to a deeper understanding of human life and can bring man to the highest forms of charity.

Christian metaphysics argues that God's love of man differs entirely from the human feeling of sympathy and the often expressed wish that "everyone may have a good time". God's love embraces the entirety of human life. Just as in a musical composition it does not make sense to pay attention to individual sounds only, so too we must see the vicissitudes of human life against the background of the eternally continued existence of the human soul. Our perspective, however, often is that of a few years only. We frequently judge things and events by what they appear to be at the present moment, and not according to their significance in a view which sees human life on earth as a first preparatory stage.

What makes also a correct evaluation difficult is the fact that we usually approach things from the standpoint of our bodily being; we are struck by things to the extent that they affect us bodily. But we should see evil and suffering more in the light of the spiritual perfection to be attained. In the final analysis our bodily reality is an expression of our spiritual principle of life.

In the Christian view of evil suffering is also the place where man meets God. In his undeserved suffering Job refuses to listen to the explanations of his friends. God himself then intervenes in the discussion to remind that he is the undisputed master of all. Job must learn not to take offense at events which he cannot understand but should worship

God[29]. He must meet God where God wants to meet him, namely in Job's suffering.[30]

Finally, for a Christian suffering is also a participation in the suffering of Christ but this aspect of the problem falls outside the scope of philosophy. In this connection the doctrine of original sin is of great importance. In his dealings with his fellow men and in his relationship to the cosmos and to himself man notices at times an inexplicable lack of balance between the suffering which he himself and others must undergo and what he thinks he may expect given his human nature, his rights and righteous behaviour. Thousands of people are suddenly struck by natural disasters, serious accidents, fatal separation or painful diseases they could neither avoid nor foresee. Nature is not as serviceable as people think they might expect it to be. In the case of pain too there is frequently a disproportion between its function of usefulness and the intensity of suffering which it brings with it. Christianity views this outrageous absence of serviceability as an effect of original sin, i.e., the condition of alienation from God in which all mankind is born and which derives from the refusal of the first man to accept a supernatural calling and a surplus of order which implied a strengthening of the finality of things and their being at man's disposal.[31]

The causes of evil

A last question to be considered is that of the causes of evil. If evil is not a positive being, it is not as such the immediate effect which a causal action is aiming at. But evil does have a cause for there must be a causal explanation why a being is deprived of its natural disposition. Evil is always a privation in or of something in a subject which exists. In fact, a being (which as such is good) is its subject; evil has no formal cause because it is the privation of form, but it has an efficient cause.[32] It arises as something accidental to the good which is produced. Hence we say that evil has a cause *per accidens*.

When analysizing the cause of evil we divide evil into evil which is the privation of a property or perfection and the evil of evil actions. The first type of evil is found in nature. To the extent that God is the ultimate

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[29] Cf. St. John Chrysostom, *De providentia* IV 17.
[30] *Job* 42, 2-5.
[31] Cf. *S.Th.* III 15, 5 ad 2: "Quod caro in peccato concepta subiacet dolori, non solum ex necessitate naturalium principiorum, sed etiam ex ratione peccati..."
[32] I 49, 1.

efficient and final cause of all beings, that is, also of those beings in which this privation occurs, he is *per accidens* the cause of the evil inherent in them. There is no contradiction between God's goodness on the one hand and the presence of evil on the other, since this kind of evil is given with created being, more in particular with material things. Since things are made from nothing, they are limited in their deepest essence.[33] Material things are subject to change because they bear within themselves the constituent for change which we call primary matter. Accordingly change, decay, passing away and hence evil exist at the substantial as well as at the accidental level.

However, the processes of change, generation and corruption take place in a world characterised by finality. As Aristotle writes with great insight, nature works for a goal and reaches this goal in most cases. Even in instances where this end, namely that of the usefulness of something for man, is not attained, there is nonetheless some finality on a lower level. Thus evil in nature serves some purpose. We can reach the same conclusion with the aid of a metaphysical argument: God is almighty and good. It is true that he does not cause evil directly. However, he does allow it to happen. This would contradict his essence, if he did not bring forth good out of evil.

Augustine expressed this insight in the well-known text: "Because God is good to the highest degree, he would in no way permit there to be any evil in his works, unless he were so almighty and good that he were able to produce good even out of evil".[34] Thomas observes that it is proper to God's infinite goodness that he permits the existence of evil, in order to bring forth the good from it.[35] It is true that the manner in which God draws good out of evil often escapes us in this life. Because evil presents itself with a considerable degree of unintelligibility we speak of the mystery of evil.[36]

We must now consider the cause of *evil actions*. In the case of "bad work" (disregarding for the moment moral reponsibility) there is human shortcoming because of a lack of application or skill or the use of poor materials, etc. In a world which consists of limited and perishable things it will never be possible to avoid all failure. A much deeper form of evil is the morally evil action where man consciously wills evil.

[33] See St. John Chrysostomus, *In exil.epist.* 2, 6-7.
[34] *Enchiridion*, ch.11.
[35] I 2, 3 ad 2.
[36] See G. Marcel, *Du refus à l'invocation*, Paris 1940, 95f.; R. Verneaux, *Problèmes et mystère du mal*, Paris 1983, 26ff.

Just as the possibility of decay and passing away is imprinted in the essence of material things, so too the possibility of deviating from the good is given with the nature of human fee will. St. Augustine connects the possibility of moral evil with the fact that under the human will lies nothingness. Moral evil is not so much doing something as "falling away", "falling short" and failing, sc. by not observing the rule of reason (as St. Thomas points out). We should not look for a cause of this falling away from the rule of reason. This would be the same as seeking an efficient cause of darkness and silence.[37]

What Augustine is saying is that evil does not have a direct efficient cause *per se*. The possibility of performing morally evil actions is an inevitable consequence of the freedom of the will. This can be explained by making a distinction between the ontological aspect of a sinful act and its formal aspect (the privation of its harmony with the rule of reason). It is true that God is the cause of the content of being in any human act, just as all beings exist by participating in the First Being. But a human act is not God's action and a human choice is not God's choice. God gives only the entitative content and occurrence of an action without being the cause which does something through this action. Hence God is no no way, not even *per accidens*, the cause who commits this action and so he is in no way the cause of the moral evil. He permits sin to take place in that he grants his causal support to the will to enable it to perform an act, despite its deviation from the rule of reason. The person who performs the evil action is *per accidens* the cause of the privation of subordination to moral law. To clarify this St. Thomas gives an example: if a cripple walks, the cause of his crippled gait is not his power to move, but his leg which is too stiff or too short. Therefore all of the entity in an evil action goes back to God as to its First Cause whereas the privation which renders it evil, comes from the acting person who does not conform himself to moral law.[38]

[37] *De civitate Dei* 12, 7.
[38] I 49, 2 ad 2.

CHAPTER NINE

BEING IS BEAUTIFUL

In their study of the properties of being some authors, following the lead of a number of medieval doctors, mention beauty as the last transcendental. On this point there is, however, a certain difficulty with regard to Aquinas' view: he does not mention beauty as one of the transcendental properties of being although he does say that all beings are beautiful. W. Czapiewski argues that, according to Thomas, beauty is a transcendental property of being[1], but F.J. Kovach and others deny this conclusion[2]. Dom H. Pouillon even goes so far as to assert that Aquinas is hardly interested in beauty[3]. On account of this controversy the question must be studied both historically and systematically.

The Greek philosophers on beauty

The original meaning of the Greek word for beautiful (καλός) is healthy, powerful, virtuous, beautiful in appearance. For the Greeks beauty implied order and symmetry. At an early date the Pythagoreans pointed out the importance of symmetry; Democritus emphasized that that which is beautiful is necessarily balanced.

For Plato Beauty is one of the main ideas: the beautiful things we see are not beauty itself but participate in it. Setting out from the experience of the beauty of material things we should ascend via the beauty of moral actions and knowledge to Beauty itself. "How will it be then, if someone is permitted to see the Beautiful in itself, in the truth of its nature, in its purity without admixture? Someone who, instead of a beauty infected by human flesh, by colours and by innumerable other dressings, would be able to see the Beautiful itself in the unity of its essence?"[4]. Plato even makes the Beautiful the highest principle in the hierarchy of being identifying it with the Good. "Everything that is good is beautiful"[5]. In his doctrine Plato gave expression to a basic attitude of the Greeks for

[1] *Das Schöne bei Thomas von Aquin*, Freiburg 1964, 131.
[2] *Die Aesthetik des Thomas von Aquin*, Berlin 1961, p.75.
[3] "La beauté chez les scolastiques", *AHLDMA* 1946, 263-315.
[4] *Symposium* 211 d.
[5] *Tim.* 87c.

whom desire for both physical and artistic as well as moral beauty, was of decisive importance in education and culture.

Aristotle, too, associated the beautiful with the divine[6], that is with that which is most excellent[7]. He describes the beautiful as the pleasant and as that which is desirable in itself[8]. In this way his description embraces the esthetically beautiful as well as moral beauty. He cites as the attributes of the beautiful: order, symmetry and limitation[9], but also size and order (something very small cannot be beautiful)[10].

In Neoplatonism the beautiful obtains a central place. Plotinus writes that the beautiful is ordered chiefly to the faculty of sight but that some kind of beauty is directed at the faculty of hearing. Inquiring into the factors which make material forms so fine and sound so sweet he argues that the cause is not so much symmetry as participation in an ideal of beauty. Whenever the soul encounters anything which bears a resemblance to that form, a shudder of recognition and joy pervades it. The treatise concludes with the following exhortation: everyone who wishes to see God and Beauty must first himself become alike God and Beauty.

"Thus the soul on its journey on high will first arrive at the intelligent principle and see all beautiful ideas in this lofty being and confess that this is Beauty and that the Ideas are Beauty. For due to their action all beauty elsewhere comes into existence... That which lies further and above the intelligent Principle is in our view the nature of the Good which radiates beauty outwards. Accordingly, if we consider the world of the intellectually knowable as one, the beautiful is the first; if we differentiate here, then the world of Ideas is the beauty of the intellectually knowable, and the Good which lies above it, is at the same time the source and principle of beauty; the first Good and the first Beautiful have one dwelling-place and thus the seat of beauty is always above"[11]. Beauty is found also in moral behaviour and in intellectual activity[12]. Beauty cannot exist without Being, no more than being without Beauty[13]. Whenever Beauty leaves Being, Being loses something of its essence. Being is desirable because it is identical with Beauty; Beauty is loved because it is Being. In order to exist, Being must participate in Beauty in one way or another.

[6] *De gen. animalium* 731 b 25.
[7] *Metaph.* 1072 b 32.
[8] *Rhetor.* 1362 b 8 and 1364 b 27.
[9] *Metaph. 1078 a 36.*
[10] *Poetica* 1435 b 37.
[11] *Enn.* I 6, 9.
[12] *Enn.* V 8.
[13] *Enn.* V 8, 9.

The meaning of beauty in the Christian tradition

As these quotations show, Plotinus teaches the ontological beauty of things. Given the large amount of attention devoted by Neoplatonism to beauty, it is not surprising that Augustine discourses on beauty in several of his works. He notes that in order to be beautiful a thing must be one, i.e. resemble its ideal form: "All beauty is unity"[14]. The parts of beautiful things are ordered to each other and to their source of unity[15]. Augustine also raises the question whether things are beautiful because they please us or whether they please us because they are beautiful. Why are things beautiful? Is it perhaps because their parts resemble each other and are brought into harmony by means of a link with each other? While answering these questions St. Augustine notes that things nonetheless do not achieve that unity they strive for and so he is confronted with the problem of where real unity can be found[16]. Adhering to the Platonic theory of participation he suggests that the knowledge of pure unity (which is the foundation of an experience of the beautiful) cannot be derived from the perception of spatially extended bodies. Beauty is the lustre of the unity and of the ordering of things.

Dionysius Areopagita, whose writings had a pervasive influence in the Latin West, pursues this line of thinking. In the splendour of his being God is beauty itself; he creates the world out of love of his own beauty; creatures share to a greater or lesser extent in his beauty[17].

Turning now to the doctors who immediately preceded St. Thomas we note that William of Auvergne asserts that that which is good is also beautiful, while John of La Rochelle adds beauty to the triad of Philip the Chancellor (unity, truth and goodness). In one text Bonaventure lists four transcendental properties of being: unity, truth, goodness and beauty[18]. Albert the Great defines beauty as "the splendour of the substantial or accidental form in the parts of matter which are proportionate and limited". The essence of beauty lies in the harmony of a plurality of parts. For Albert this proportion of the parts is the material element of beauty, while splendour is the formal constituent[19]. In his

[14] *Epist.* 18, 2.
[15] *De Genesi ad litteram lib.imp.* 16, 59.
[16] *De vera religione*, 32.
[17] *De divinis nominibus*, ch. 4.
[18] See F.-M. Henquinet, "Un brouillon autographe de S. Bonaventure sur le Commentaire des *Sentences*", in *Etudes franciscaines* 44(1933)59-82. I owe this reference to the article by Dom Pouillon quoted in n. 3.
[19] See H. Pouillon, p.295ff.

Super Dionysium De divinis nominibus[20] he assigns three essential characteristics to beauty: the splendour of the form in well proportionate parts; the eliciting of desire; the gathering together of all things by their form of which the splendour constitutes the beautiful (*congregat omnia ex parte formae cuius resplendentia facit pulchrum*).

Aquinas on beauty

Thomas Aquinas determines the concept of the beautiful as follows: it is proper to the good to satisfy our striving when we attain it, while it is proper to the beautiful to do so when it is known. Consequently the beautiful adds something to the good, namely the ordering towards the cognitive faculty. Hence that which pleases our appetite is called good, while the object the knowledge of which pleases is called beautiful[21]. "The beautiful and the good are the same in the subject, because they are founded on the same thing, namely the form; hence it is that the good is also praised as beautiful. But they differ in their conceptual content. For the good refers properly to the appetite: good is in fact that for which all things strive. And this is why the good has the nature of a goal, as the appetite is as it were a kind of movement towards the thing itself. The beautiful, however, is related to the cognitive faculty, since the things which please when seen are called beautiful. Hence the beautiful consists in the right proportion: our senses find pleasure in things which possess the right proportions as in things which resemble them. For the senses, like every cognitive faculty, are also reason to a certain extent. And because knowledge takes place through assimilation, and likeness is associated to form, the beautiful pertains properly to what we understand by the formal cause"[22].

In this text Aquinas not only gives a definition of beauty but also, setting out from the beauty first known and accessible to us,—namely that of the objects of sight and hearing—, states that something must be beautiful and ordered if it is to produce this satisfaction which the experience of beauty brings with it. In numerous passages of his works St. Thomas writes that a harmonious ordering of the parts of a thing is essential to beauty. He speaks of "the proportion required"[23], "being proportioned" (of the parts to each other) and "the harmony of the

[20] *Opera omnia*, 37, 1, Münster 1972, p.182.
[21] *S.Th.* I-II 27, 1 ad 3.
[22] I 5, 4 ad 1.
[23] II-II 180, 2 ad 3.

parts"[24], "being well ordered"[25]. Presupposed by this order is the integrity of a thing[26]. Together with these characteristics Aquinas repeatedly mentions lustre and clarity as proper to the beautiful[27]. A being which is beautiful shows itself to man in radiating clarity[28].

The order and clarity which constitute the beautiful arise from the essential form of the beautiful things. The form is the ultimate basis of their beauty and is itself beautiful. It is a most intense participation in God's beauty and lustre. "Every form by means of which a thing possesses being, is a certain participation in God's clarity and splendour"[29]. "The form is something divine and of the greatest excellence; it is desirable. It is something divine because every form is a certain partici-pation in a likeness to the divine being which is pure act: everything is realized to the extent that it possesses form. The form is most excellent because the act is the perfection of the potency and its good; and as a result the form is also desirable, as everything strives for its perfection"[30]. Thomas also calls this participation in God's perfection a particularization (*particulatio*): the form which in itself is unlimited, is particularized, limited and as it were divided into individual forms[31]. A form is a luminous reality which proceeds from the first clarity and lustre, that is, from God[32].

All being is beautiful

It follows from this that all things are beautiful. This does not mean that they are so to sight or to hearing, but that their being is full of shining lustre[33]. As Gerald B. Phelan writes: "All things are beautiful because

[24] *In De divinis nominibus*, c.4, lectio 8.
[25] I-II 54, 1.
[26] I 39, 8.
[27] II-II 180, 2 ad 3.
[28] I 39, 8.
[29] *In De div.nom.*, c.4, lectio 5, n.349.
[30] *In I Phys.*, lectio 15, n.135. In his *Q.d. de potentia* Aquinas speaks of the *formositas actualitatis* (the beauty of being in act).
[31] I 84, 7.
[32] *In De div.nom.*, c.4, lectio 6: "Irradiatio proveniens ex prima claritate". On the relationship between Aquinas' doctrine of beauty and the theory of Dionysius see J. Kovach, "Der Einfluß der Schrift des Pseudo-Dionysius *De divinis nomnibus* auf die Schönheitsphilosophie des Thomas von Aquin", in *Archiv f.Geschichte der Philosophie* 63(1981) 151-166. See also *In De div. Nom.*, c.4, lectio 5, n.353: "Omnia enim facta sunt ut divinam pulchritudinem qualitercumque imitentur".
[33] *In De div.nom.*, c. 4, lectio 5, n.337; 339. Cf. *De pot.*, q.4, a.2 ad 31.

they exist [read: they are existing formal perfections] and the degree of their beauty is in precise proportion to the perfection of their being"[34].

Perceiving beauty

Beauty as a transcendental attribute of being is known by the intellect because both components of beauty, namely lustre as well as order and proportion of parts, are recognised by reason, as they are characteristic of reason itself[35]. Reason is a light which discovers order and which can also bring about order in other things.

But other cognitive faculties also perceive the beautiful. We know from experience that we do not refer to the objects of the senses of smell, touch and taste as being beautiful. Only those sense faculties which are most cognitive experience the beautiful, viz. sight and hearing to the extent that they serve reason[36]. This has its explanation in the fact that the experience of beauty is the perception of the lustre of a form and of the proportion and the harmony of the parts. Now in the last analysis only the intellect can know this lustre and order or proportion. Senses such as sight and hearing do know forms and sounds, but without the assistance of the intellect beauty as such, namely this being adapted to and in harmony with the most profound urge of the intellect towards clarity and order, cannot be known. No animal has an experience of beauty in the strict sense of the term, even if it possesses the material elements for it.

The lower senses consider their objects less as something which presents itself apart from the knower, than as something which is directly related to the subject. As a result these senses have a lesser capacity for the perception of clarity and order. Their collaboration with the intellect is also less direct than that of sight and hearing.

The beautiful and the appetite of the intellect and the will

The beautiful is defined as that of which the knowledge pleases. The beautiful is essentially a thing in which the act of knowing and the basic striving of the intellect find satisfaction and come to rest[37]. 'Striving'

[34] "The Concept of Beauty in St. Thomas Aquinas", in *G.B. Phelan, Select Papers*, Toronto 1967, 160. Cf. St. Thomas, *In De div.nom.*,c.4, n.355: "Nihil est quod non participet pulchro et bono, cum unumquodque sit pulchrum et bonum secundum propriam formam".
[35] II-II 180, 2 ad 3.
[36] I-II 27, 1 ad 3.
[37] *L.c.*: "Ad rationem pulchri pertinet quod in eius aspectu seu cognitione quietetur appetitus".

means here in the first place the drive of the higher faculties of knowing towards clear knowledge, but it also denotes the appetitive faculty itself (both the sensitive and the intellectual appetite) which finds its fulfilment by resting in this beautiful object of knowledge[38].

To the extent that the beautiful rests on clarity and lustre as well as on the harmony of proportionate parts (or on the inner riches of the essence),—called the *ratio obiectiva pulchri-*, it is related to truth and is called the lustre of the true (*splendor veri*). However, to the extent that the experience of beauty satiates the appetite (the *ratio subiectiva pulchri*), beauty is related to the good. Thomas points out that the beautiful and the good are the same in the thing, because both are based on the form[39]. He calls the beautiful a species of the good[40]. This does not mean that the beautiful is one class of good things (as a tiger is one species of animal life) and so would not extend as far as the transcendental good. Aquinas expressly confirms that all creatures are beautiful and that every form is something radiant and excellent. But by the expression *species boni* is clearly meant that the beautiful adds something to the good, namely a particular harmony with the intellect which results from the clarity and proportionate order proper to things. To the extent that the beautiful is ordered to the cognitive faculties it is related to the true, while to the extent it satisfies the appetitive faculty, it is related to the good.

The beautiful is accordingly that property of being which arises from a combination of the true and the good. This explains why it is not mentioned by Aquinas as a special transcendental.

As it is a synthesis of 'true' and 'good' the beautiful is the object of man's contemplative knowledge which will attain its perfection in the bliss of the contemplation of God. The beautiful is admired and loved because of its form, —it is not in the first place a good one wishes to attain. The contemplative life itself is beautiful. It is in an eminent manner the activity of the intellect performed in clarity and proper order.

[38] One may compare I 5, 4 ad 1: "Pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent. Unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit quia sensus delectantur in rebus debite proportionatis..." This text shows that Aquinas has in mind a certain satiation of the cognitive faculty by the beautiful ("pulchrum respicit vim cognoscitivam"). But this knowledge of the beautiful is accompanied by the inclination of the appetite toward it so that Thomas can also write that the appetite comes to rest (text quoted in n.37).

[39] I 5, 4 ad 1: "Pulchrum et bonum in subiecto quidem sunt idem, quia super eandem rem fundantur..." On the expression "nam et sensus ratio quaedam cognoscitiva" see the suggestion made by A. Van Groenewoud who wants to understand *ratio* as *proportio* (*Revue thomiste* 78(1978)619-624.

[40] I-II 180, 2 ad 3.

The moral virtues are also beautiful to the extent that they participate in and bring about this ordering of human acts to the true end of man[41]. David Hume writes: "There is no spectacle so fair and beautiful as a noble and generous action"[42].

The beauty of being and modern philosophers

Philosophers who no longer place truth and goodness in reality will also deny the objective beauty of things. Kant, for instance, asserts that the judgment of taste is not a judgment of cognition, but is based upon purely subjective factors[43]. The reduction of beauty to a subjective evaluation is widespread. G. Santayana raises the question why other people should find the same things beautiful as one does oneself. This need not be, because beauty does not exist in the outside world but is a value which is attached by us to something. Beauty is the objectivation of a certain pleasure[44].

According to J.-P. Sartre aesthetic consideration is a dream conjured up, and the transition to reality is a genuine awakening. Real things are never beautiful. Beauty is a value which can only be applied to what we imagine and which includes in itself the denial of the world in its essential structure"[45].

These views establish an opposition between the world of facts and the realm of values. As A. Maurer writes, the opinion that beauty is subjective and things are ugly is a legacy to modern philosphy from Kant who claims that the basis of a judgment about beauty can only be the feeling of pleasure at being affected by a thing. Now such feeling, he argues, is purely subjective[46]. However, our experience of beautiful things conflicts with these theories. None of the latter explains why a beautiful thing is experienced as objectively beautiful: a sunset, a mountain range, animals, trees and flowers are experienced as beautiful in themselves. St. Thomas' doctrine of the beautiful affirms the objective character of beauty, but it does not deny that in the perception of the beautiful emotion and pleasure do have a place, as we intimated above when we spoke of the *ratio subiectiva pulchri*.

[41] I-II 110, 2, *Sed contra*. Cf. C. O'Neill, "The Notion of Beauty in the Ethics of St. Thomas", in *The New Scholasticism* 14(1940) 346-378.

[42] *A Treatise of Human Nature*, III 1, 2 (quoted after A.A. Maurer, C.S.B., *About Beauty. A Thomistic Interpretation*, Houston 1983, p.71).

[43] See his *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 11.

[44] *The Sense of Beauty*, New York 1896, § 11.

[45] *L'imaginaire*, 245.

[46] *O.c.*, p.25. See Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 15.

In this connection we must remember that metaphysics studies things which are not man-made; it does not consider the objects of human art as such. The evaluation of the beauty of the latter can be more difficult because of the interference of the idea (form) an artist wanted to convey. The constituent elements of the definition of beauty may not all be present in a work of art. For instance, integrity or harmony of parts are sometimes sacrificed to convey a certain idea such as the repulsiveness of some of the products of technology, extreme poverty or the shabby side of human life.

CHAPTER TEN

THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTRADICTION BEING IS NOT NOT-BEING

In their search for the foundations of scientific knowledge numerous philosophers have observed that there must be one or several evident, i.e. intuitively grasped propositions which form the origin of the certitude of such knowledge. One of these authors is Parmenides who built his monism on the insight that "it is impossible that being is not-being"[1] and that "it will never be possible to show that not-being is"[2].

First principles in the history of philosophy

Plato placed the origin of intellectual knowledge in the recollection of what our souls have contemplated before they entered a body. But he also mentioned what we now call the principle of contradiction: "The same thing in relation to the same and in the same regard cannot have contradictory properties"[3]. In the *Parmenides* 127e he quotes the words of Zeno: "Dissimilar things are not similar, nor similar things dissimilar".

As we shall see below, it is Aristotle's merit to have elaborated the theory of the first principles of being. But awareness of the need of such axioms is not restricted to the ancients. Descartes' *cogito* is a first principle; Spinoza sets out from the proposition that substance by nature is prior to its attributes. Kant recognized as the first axiom the principle of identity which, he writes, is the basis of all analytical judgments[4]; it is itself an analytical judgment a priori and has nothing to do with synthetic judgments which are formed on the basis of experience; accordingly it is valid only in the logical order. Besides this principle Kant accepts the principle of contradiction as the negative logical condition of valid thinking: a judgment cannot contradict itself[5].

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[1] Diels and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, "Parmenides", fr.4.
[2] Fragm.7.
[3] *State* 437a.
[4] Cf. E. Berti, in (coll.) *La contraddizione*, (a cura di E. Berti) Roma 1977, p.16.
[5] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, I 2, 2, 2, 1 (B 189/ A 150).

Hegel, on the other hand, rejects Kant's principle of identity since it reduces being to something static and dead. He himself places contradiction in the heart of reality: even such relative terms as father and son are viewed by him as contradictory. Each of the opposed poles attempts to do away with the other and to reach a new synthesis[6].

Neopositivists, however, reject the need for a first principle and accept only functional propositions[7] or view the traditional first principles as the outcome of an agreement or of habituation[8]. The initiator of the transcendental sect in scholasticism, J. Maréchal, chose to see in the principle of contradiction nothing more than the expression of a blind requirement of subjective necessity, viz. a demand of the human intellect which confirms this principle with a transcendental act[9]. The contradiction is found in our thinking, K. Rahner writes, not in the order of things[10]. This position shows disregard for being, because the human mind "manipulates" things and imposes its view on them. —A last voice in this choir is that of J.-P. Sartre who says that the principle of identity is valid only for being-in-itself (*l'être-en-soi*), but is not applicable to man's mind (*le pour-soi*).

The principle of contradiction: Aristotle and Aquinas

After this concise survey of the history of the place of first principles in philosophical thinking we must now proceed to a systematic enquiry. Aristotle shows as follows the necessity of a first evident principle as the point of departure of scientific knowledge[11]: if the starting point of our arguments is not the very first beginning, it is necessary to seek a further explanation and cause of the things we are considering. If this quest for ever more profound causes were to continue indefinitely, certitude would never be attained. However, if there are sciences, that is, if there is certain knowledge of things, there must be first principles immediately known to us; they are not demonstrable, but are necessarily true.

In the elaboration of his doctrine of first principles of scientific

[6] *Wissenschaft der Logik*, II 64ff. (VI 64). This process of *Aufhebung* (negation and transposition) which results from the absolute opposition leads to progress. See F. Grégoire, "Hegel et le principe de contradiction", in *RPL* 44(1946) 36-76. One must note that nothing is absolute: in Hegel's view all things are relative to other things.

[7] Cf. J. Dewey, *Logic. A Theory of Inquiry*, New York 1938.

[8] Cf. R. Carnap. "Formalwissenschaft und Realwissenschaft", in *Erkenntnis* 5(1935).

[9] *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, V, 500.

[10] *Geist in Welt*, p.90, n.27.

[11] *Analytica posteriora*, I, ch.2.

knowledge Aristotle was undoubtedly inspired by the model of geometry which, on the basis of certain axioms (with the aid of basic concepts and definitions) constructs a coherent set of propositions. In order to develop an apodictic science it is necessary to have evident points of departure and propositions which are the mean in the syllogisms forming the demonstrations.

The necessity of first principles can also be proven from an analysis of the development of human thinking: we know from our own experience that this development proceeds from very indistinct and general thoughts to more determinate and exact knowledge. Now the most general concept with a wholly indeterminate content is being, as it is the simplest of all concepts and, in a sense, the most imperfect. If this applies to the level of the formation of concepts, we may assume that on the level of the second operation of the intellect (*operatio secunda*) there must also be a first, most general, very imperfect but nevertheless fully evident point of departure. This must be an insight related to being[12].

First principles and first facts

In order to clarify the place and meaning of such a first principle we may refer to a text of M. Merleau-Ponty. This French philosopher states that the first point of departure for certain knowledge cannot be a principle like that of Parmenides, e.g., that being is and not-being is not, but must rather be the experience that something exists[13]. Merleau-Ponty is right in pointing out that the existence of the world is a basic datum. But it is a fact which manifests itself as irrefutable, not however as intrinsically and absolutely necessary. Merleau-Ponty replaces a necessary structure of being with a fact of experience and, in his bent toward phenomenology, shifts the emphasis of what the being of things is in itself toward our experience of being.

In metaphysics we do of course accept our own existence and that of the world as incontrovertible facts. But to obtain certain and universally valid knowledge about being we need more than the fact of the contingent existence of things. The basis for this scientific knowledge is the inner structure of being itself, even if we know this nature of being only through our continuous contact with the (contingent) being of things. For this reason the experience of the senses is necessary: all our knowledge

[12] St. Thomas gives this proof in *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 6, n.605.

[13] *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 121.

rests on it and cannot extend further than to where this experience allows us to go[14]. In its first operation the intellect knows the universal essence of things, abstracting it from the sense data but in the second operation it returns to concrete reality when stating that a certain predicate belongs to a subject.

This insight rests upon the connection (called *collatio* by Thomas) between the subject and predicate as present in the representation of the internal senses, viz. in the *cogitativa*. This highest sense faculty[15] which acts under the influence of the intellect, brings about a comparison between the subject and the predicate which becomes an insight and an enuntiation in the intellect itself. By the very evidence of this insight the intellect is compelled to pronounce that things are really such or such as they manifest themselves through the senses.

When these insights deal with the most general attributes of being we speak of first principles[16]. These principles of being (of fundamental importance in metaphysics as well as in the sciences which all depend on them) come to us spontaneously in our experience of contingent beings. But there is more to these principles than an experience of contingent existence: they consist in compelling, universally valid insights which express the structure, laws and properties of being as present in contingent things, not as regards the universal form in which we express these principles but as regards the truth of their contents. An example will make clear what is meant: the principle of contradiction is universal but it expresses in the first place that a dog is not a cat (i.e. a 'not-dog'); in each thing lies enclosed that it is not something else.

Why first principles are necessary

St. Thomas points out that in order to reach happiness man must attain perfect knowledge. However, perfect knowledge requires absolute certainty, as we do not know a thing completely and entirely unless we know that it cannot be otherwise[17]. Aquinas' thesis is supported by Christian

[14] Cf. *In I Post.Analyt.*, lectio 30, n.354; *S.Th.* I-II 3,6: "Prima autem principia scientiarum speculativarum sunt per sensum accepta...Unde tota consideratio scientiarum speculativarum non potest ultra extendi quam sensibilium cognitio ducere potest".

[15] This faculty corresponds to what in animals is the *vis aestimativa* or what the moderns call instinct (For the St. Thomas the term 'instinct' applies to the faculty of appetite).

[16] Cf. *In I Metaph.*, lectio 1, nn.14-30; *In II Post.Anal.*, lectio 20, nn.592ff. See J.S. Stromberg, "An Essay on *Experimentum*", in *Laval Théologique et philosophique* 23(1967)76-115; 24(1968)99-138. The author points out that according to St. Thomas *experimentum* (i.e., the forming of general insights and knowledge on the basis of sense experience, memory and judgment) is proper to man only.

[17] *S.C.G.* III 39.

optimism which also brings him to assert that man must be able to attain certitude. If this were not possible, man's basic drive for knowledge and truth could not be fulfilled and there would be a contradiction in man's nature.

Sciences in the Scholastic sense of the term, that is to say, meaning certain knowledge of reality based on the knowledge of the causes. have axioms as their foundation. Because some of these axioms or first principles follow on the primary concepts of our thought and are general, they are presupposed by all the sciences, which use them but do not analyse them. To give an example, scientists do not examine certain principles which are presupposed in their scientific work such as the knowability of things, the non-arbitrariness of nature, the principle of causality, etc.

These principles are studied in metaphysics which has common being and its properties as its subject matter[18]. In addition to these general axioms,—i.e., laws of being which hold for all reality—, there also exist less general principles for particular genera or levels of being. These are used in particular sciences. For example, the philosophy of nature, while it presupposes the most general axioms, has its own principles[19].

Thomas holds that the first and most fundamental axiom is that "being is not not-being". But besides this axiom there are countless other principles concerning being, its attributes and its activity. For instance, "between being and not-being there is no mean"; "a being is always something", "a being is one"; "a being has a meaning and a knowable essence"; "a cause is distinct from, prior to and more perfect than its effect"; "an agent always works something similar to itself", etc. The number of these principles, that is, of basic insights into the nature of being, is very considerable: one finds them on practically every page of the *Summa theologiae*.

The formulation of the first principle

In his treatment of the first and most general principle of being Aquinas makes his own Aristotle's position. In *Metaphysics* IV, ch.3 two formulations occur of what Aristotle calls the first principle: "The same attribute cannot at the same time be predicated and not predicated of the

[18] *In IV Metaph.*, lect.5, n.593: "(scientiae ad quam pertinet consideratio entis communis) eius erit etiam considerare huiusmodi principia communia".

[19] Generation and corruption require composition out of primary matter and substantial form; the continuous is prior to its parts. —In Euclidian geometry the well-known axioms about points, lines and surfaces are basic.

same subject in the same regard"[20]; "It is impossible for someone to suppose that the same thing is and is not, as Heraclitus asserts according to some authors"[21]. It would not be correct to construct a contrast between these two wordings. In both cases a statement is made about the ontological structure of things: the first formula reflects the principle in a logical and formal manner, the second is adapted to ordinary language and is, as we shall see, closer to the ontological foundation of the axiom.

St. Thomas himself uses different formulations: "It is impossible to be and at the same time not to be"[22]; "It is not possible...that the same should exist and at the same time not exist"[23]; "an assertion and a denial are not true at the same time"[24]; "It is impossible to affirm and to deny simultaneously"[25]. On closer inspection these statements appear to be based on the same insight, viz. that being is not not-being.

The origin of the principle of contradiction is as follows: Our first concept is that of being. Next the intellect experiences the opposition between being and not-being. St. Thomas describes this in the following way: "The first thing to enter the intellect is being; the second is the denial of being; from these two there follows in the third place the insight of separation (from the fact that something is understood to be being and that it is understood not to be this being, the intellect grasps that it is separated from it); in the fourth place comes the concept of unity"[26].

The concept of not-being

But what is this *not-being* which is said to be the predicate in the first judgment? Some take it to denote absolute nothingness. The principle would express its total opposition to being[27]. But the concept of pure nothingness is problematic: the not-being cannot just be nothingness,

[20] *Metaph.* 1005 b 19.
[21] *Ibid.*, 1005 b 23.
[22] *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 6, n.605.
[23] *Ibid.*, n.683.
[24] *De verit.*, q.5, a.2 ad 7.
[25] *S.Th.* II-II 1, 7.
[26] *Q.d. de potentia*, q.8, a.7 ad 15; cf. *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 6, n.605.
[27] See, for instance, B. Lakebrink, *Hegels dialektische Ontologie und die Thomistische Analektik*, Ratingen 1968, 140ff.: "Im negativen Widerspruchsprinzip geht das Prädikat, wie in jedem echten Urteil, über das Subjekt hinaus und zwar zu dem Einzigen, was es außerhalb des Seins zu finden vermag, zum Nichts: Ab eo (esse) nihil est extraneum nisi non esse (*De Potentia*, 7, 2 ad 9)". Likewise L. Clavell, "Il primo principio della conoscenza intellettuale", in *Atti del VIII Congresso tomistico internazionale, VII*, Città del Vaticano 1982, p.73. C. Vansteenkiste, however, discards this view (*Rassegna di letteratura tomistica* XVIII (1982) 130.

because at this primitive level the intellect does not even have such a concept[28]. Moreover, this would not make sense. Negation comes after the first judgement, that is, after the intellect has understood that in the world of things there is an opposition between this being and that, which Thomas calls the opposition between being and not-being since the *intellect* (contrary to the senses) first knows this concrete opposition in a *general* and *abstract* way.

Aquinas himself helps us to understand what he means by not-being when he writes that this term has three meanings: a) it may refer to an erroneous judgment (e.g., the assertion that a thing is warm, whereas it is not). b) the term can denote being in potency; c) finally the term may refer to something which is not "this" but something else[29]. It would seem that in the first principle 'not-being' has the third meaning: the intellect understands that one being is not another. Thomas indicates this solution: "The separation which is presupposed to the concept of unity (inasmuch as unity is meant which is convertible with being in a proposition) is the separation which is caused by a contradiction to the extent that this being and that are said to be separated, on the basis of the fact that this is not that"[30].

The not-being which is contrary to being is not not-being as a pure denial, but a not being in a particular sense (*secundum quid*), namely a not-being-this. The intellect which formed the concept of being from the things which the senses presented to it, now becomes aware of the fact that it is not another thing, and the intellect grasps this when it is confronted with this other. "A distinction is not made between this being and that (other) being except that in this being lies the denial of that being"[31]. This remarkable text of Aquinas says that the first judgment is not a negative judgment in the sense that the predicate is a mere denial. It expresses what is proper to the being of things, viz. that of being distinct from other beings or the difference of this from that. This also implies that according to St. Thomas the ontological foundation of the first principle has priority over its epistemological application, whereas

[28] Cf. *Q.d.potentia*, q.9, a.7 ad 6: "Negatio vel privatio non potest esse primum quod intellectu concipitur, cum semper quod negatur vel privatur sit de intellectu negationis vel privationis".
[29] *In V Physicorum*, lectio 2, n.656.
[30] *In X Metaph.*, Lectio 4, n.1997 ("quod hoc non est illud"). Cf. *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 3. n.566.
[31] See *Expos. in Boetii De Trinitate*. q.4,a.1: "Similiter etiam ab hoc ente non dividitur hoc ens nisi per hoc quod in hoc ente includitur negatio illius entis". Cf. C. Courtès, "L'être et le non-être selon saint Thomas d'Aquin", in *Revue thomiste* 66(1966)575-610; 67(1967)387-436.

in modern philosophy this application frequently obtains absolute precedence[32].

The fact that the first judgment expresses difference and separation is of major importance, since to the extent it does so it opens the way for further thought. The intellect is now no longer limited to the first extremely general knowledge of the reality of being but begins to compare beings and becomes attentive to their contents. A kind of repetition of this process of separation takes place when one enters metaphysics: the intellect reaches the insight that it is not necessary for being to be material. By this negative observation (which Aquinas calls *separatio*) the intellect is as it were freed so as to go behind material reality and to get to know being as such (*ens commune*), and finally to ascend to the wholly Other, who is the First Being. In a sense the first judgment outlines the path toward the spiritual goal of man, scil. his encounter with the Other, who is the perfection of his life[33].

The first principle, matrix of all judgments

Knowledge is a form of life. The organic growth which we see in nature furnishes a better image of what the acquisition of new knowledge is, than the mechanical or quantitative addition of new things to things already present. New concepts are not completely independent entities which are added to the concept of being by juxtaposition but are further determinations of a first matrix of thought, sc. being. Only in this way the super-organic unity of intellectual life is possible. But that which occurs on the level of conceptual knowledge must also take place on the level of the second operation of the mind (affirmations and negations): all affirmations and denials are forms and further developments of a first judgment[34]. The first judgment which expresses the separateness, the opposition of two terms is based on a comparison: the intellect sees and expresses the fact that their composition does not agree with reality. Hence this judgment surpasses a mere affirmative judgment and can form the matrix for all later assertions whether affirmative or negative.

This does not mean that this judgment contains within itself all further

[32] Cf.M.C. Bartolomei, *Tomismo e principio di non con-traddizione*, Padova 1973; G.E. Ponferrada, "Los primeros principios", in *Sapientia* 34(1979) 171-206, p.74. See also *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 6, n.606 ("Ex hoc enim sequitur...").

[33] See our "Le premier principe de la vie intellective", in *Revue thomiste* 62(1962)571-586, p.582.

[34] Cf. G. Verbeke, "Le développement de la connaissance humaine d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin", in *RPL* 47(1949)437-457.

assertions and denials in such a way that one would be able to deduce everything directly from this principle. Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and the ontologists accept such principles but in the philosophy of St. Thomas the first judgment is the most potential principle: whenever new knowledge is acquired the first principle is actualized into new judgments. These judgments are not experienced as the concretisation of the first principle (which they are in fact), but are attached to it via a reduction to the absurd. In the perfect knowledge of God, however, everything is known in one principle, namely God's essence itself[35].

Is the first principle a universal judgment?

If one inquires whether the first judgment is a concrete or a universal judgment, the answer is that it is the formulation of the most general law of being on the basis of what we experience concretely. The principle expresses a structure of being. The existence of things is certainly evident in the sense of irrefutably given[36]. But because the being of created things is not their essence[37], this existence is the condition for, but not the content of the universally valid laws of being which the first principles are[38]. The first principles formulate the nature of being and its properties and activity which belong always and necessarily to all beings. Hence in these principles the predicates possess one of the following functions: they express the essence of the subject entirely or partially ('being is not not-being'; 'being is good', etc.); they express a property of the subject (for instance, the principle 'the whole is larger than each of its parts'; 'that which comes into being has a cause'); they express something which is excluded by the subject (e.g., a body is not without extension')[39].

If the first principle is really first, no proof of it whatever is possible. It arises from the comparison of this being with another being and expresses the separateness of both which is known immediately by intuition. Aristotle also speaks of an intuitive knowledge of the princi-

[35] Duns Scotus assumes that the immediately known propositions with regard to a particular science contain virtually this entire science. According to St. Thomas this is not the case. See Cajetan, *In I S.Th.*, q.1, a.7.

[36] Cf. *In II Phys.*, lectio 1, n.148: "Ridiculum est quod aliquis tenet demonstrare quod natura sit, cum manifestum sit secundum sensum".

[37] This will be shown in a next chapter.

[38] See *Q.d. de veritate*, q.10, a.12: "Hoc autem quod est esse, in nullius creaturae ratione perfecte includitur. Cuiuslibet enim creaturae esse est aliud ab eius quidditate; unde non potest dici de aliqua creatura quod eam esse sit per se notum secundum se".

[39] *In I Post.Anal.*, lectio 36, n.315.

ples of being[40]. St. Thomas expressly posits that the principle of contradiction comes to us by nature[41].

It is possible, however, to demonstrate indirectly the truth of the first principle by means of a so-called reduction to the absurd: the denial of the principle is absolutely impossible. Aristotle deals with it at length in *Metaph.* IV, ch.3 ff. and shows that such a denial takes away all meaning from our words, destroys every essence (what remains are words without a subject and without a particular content, such as a flight without a bird or a dream without a dreamer); the denial does away with all distinctions between things, destroys all truth and all thoughts and leaves every desire without content. The denial makes becoming itself meaningless since there remains no point of departure or point of arrival. Due to this denial all knowledge becomes senseless and so it reduces human life to a vegetative existence[42].

Divergent views of some Thomists

Some reputable Thomists such as R. Garrigou-Lagrange and J. Maritain argue that the first principle must be an affirmatory judgment[43]. They had a predecessor in Antonius Andreas who asserted that "every being is a being" must be the first principle[44]. Suarez, however, calls this judgment a *nugatio*, "twaddle"[45]. Maritain is more cautious and suggests that the first judgment must declare that a being is really a thing,has a particular content and is recognized by the intellect[46]. Garrigou states his view as follows: every being is of a particular nature which constitutes it properly speaking. Other Thomists as the Canadian G. Phelan fall back on the words of Antonius Andreas and come dangerously close to sheer tautology.

The reason why these Thomists depart from Aristotle and Thomas is apparently their conviction that the first judgment cannot be negative and that being is itself: the acknowledgment of this evidence would be

[40] *Eth.Nicom.* 1141 a 7. Aquinas translates this by *intellectus principiorum* (*S.Th.* I 79, 12).

[41] *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 6, n.604.

[42] *Metaph.* 1046 a 14.

[43] R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Dieu, son existence et sa nature*, I, 2, 3 n.20: "Every negation is founded on an affirmation".

[44] *Comment. in IV Metaph.*, q.5. *Comment. in IV Metaph.*, q.5. See Suarez, *Disput. metaph.* III 3, 4.

[45] On the history of the principle of identity see G. Ponferrada, *o.c.*, 186-192.

[46] *Sept leçons sur l'être et la raison spéculative*, p.102. Cf. also R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le sens commun, la philosophie de l'être et les formules dogmatiques*, Paris 1930, I 2, 6.

prior to any comparison of one being with other things or with sheer nothingness. The account we have given above has already solved the first difficulty. As regards the second one may observe that if a predicate has the same meaning as the subject there is no real affirmation but a tautology. For the predicate no longer determines the subject and so the judgment no longer expresses anything: nothing can be deduced from it. If, with Maritain and Garrigou-Lagrange, one uses the predicate in a different sense (and not that of 'being'), there certainly is a judgment, but there is no proof that the proposition thus proposed is the first pinciple[47]. The analysis we have given above has made it clear that the principle of contradiction must come first psychologically and also logically. It becomes evident that a being is itself when we separate it from other things.

Other principles

The principle of contradiction is the first principle but there are a great number of other general principles of being. One may find many of them formulated in the various questions of the *Summa theologiae* of Aquinas. There is the principle of the excluded middle (there is no mean between being and not-being). One may add the following principles: the whole is greater than any of its parts; being has some content; being is one; being is true; being is good; being is beautiful. In particular the different aspects of the relation of a cause to its effect are expressed by numerous principles: a cause is distinct from, prior to and more perfect than (or at least equally perfect as) its effect; what becomes has a cause; what exists contingently has a cause; what is composed has a cause; an act is only limited by a potency really distinct from it; the first in a genus is the cause of everything in that genus; every being has some operation; an agent produces an effect similar to itself; every agent works in view of an end, etc.

These principles are obtained from experience. "The principles which are self-evident (*per se nota*) are immediately known in an insight acquired through the senses, just as when we have seen a whole and its parts, we know immediately without any investigation that every whole is larger than one of its parts"[48]. On the basis of its contact (via the interior

[47] As to the principle that a thing is identical with itself cf. *In V Physic.*, lectio 3, n.667: "Manifestum est enim quod quodlibet sibi ipsi est idem". However, it presupposes the principle of contradiction. See R. Verneaux, "Le principe d'identité chez saint Thomas", *Sapientia* 29 (1974)83-106.

[48] *In I Sent.*d.3, q.1, a.2.

senses) with what is perceived by the exterior senses the intellect forms the concepts 'whole' and 'part' and 'sees' that the whole must be larger. This insight is therefore born immediately from experience[49]. It is not, however, necessary that the intellect should instantly know the general principles when it first enters into contact with reality. At times repeated contact over a certain period of time may be required[50].

The light of the agent intellect makes us see in the sense data about reality the basic properties of being which we express in general principles. Once it has been acquired this knowledge remains present in the mind as a *habitus*, that is, a state which is halfway between potency and actualization[51]. The habitus of the first principles is actualized in any affirmation, negation of reasoning.

The first principles are divided into principles which are self-evident in themselves but not for us (*principia per se nota quoad se*) and principles which are evident to us. An example of the first group is the principle that God exists which in itself is the most obvious truth thinkable, but is not so for us. The second group is subdivided into principles which are obvious to all (such as the principle that the whole is larger than one of its parts) and principles which are evident only to a certain number of people (called *sapientes*). An example of the latter category is the principle that every agent produces something resembling itself or that all created things are composite.

A last question is whether error is possible in regard to the principles of being. St. Thomas repreatedly asserts that this is not the case: "No one can err in those matters which are known to us by nature; after all no one errs in the knowledge of the unprovable principles"[52]. He indicates the reason: "...no error is possible in regard to these propositions which are known immediately", that is as soon as the meaning of the terms is known, as is the case in regard to the first principles[53]. Aquinas even writes that God equipped the soul with the light of the intellect and gave it the knowledge of first principles which are, as it were, seedbeds for the sciences, just as he has also placed in other things in nature the basic content of all effects which they will bring forth as if from seed[54].

[49] *Q.d. de veritate*, q.10, a.12.

[50] Cf. *In I Post. Anal.*, lectio 30, n.252; *In II Post. Anal.*, lectio 20, n.592.

[51] Cf. *S.C.G.* I 56: "Habitus est...ordinata aggregatio ipsarum specierum existentium in intellectu non secundum completum actum, sed medio modo inter potentiam et actum". See J. Guillet, "La 'lumière intellectuelle' d'après S.Thomas", in *AHLDMA* 2 (1927) 79-88.

[52] *S.C.G.*. III 46; *In III De anima*, lectio 9, (Leon.246, 106): "Non enim erramus circa prima principia in operabilibus ...sicut nec erramus circa prima principia in speculativis".

[53] S.Th. II-II 180, 6 ad 2.

[54] *Q.d. de veritate*, q.2, a.1 ad 5.

On the other hand, in certain texts Aquinas speaks of philosophers who err in regard to principles[55]. However, there is no contradiction here if we distinguish between the very first principles and principles which are derived to some extent and are somewhat more complex, such as, for instance, the principle that every agent works in view of an end. One must also distinguish between a practical acceptance of some principles on the one hand and a theoretical denial on the other. In this connection it must also be pointed out that an erroneous or biassed representation of certain concepts such as being, essence, existence, cause, etc., leads to faulty metaphysics.

[55] Cf. *S.Th.* I-II 72, 5: "Nam in speculativis qui errat circa principia impersuasibilis est". See also II-II 154, 12 and G.Verbeke, "Certitude et incertitude", in *Studi su San Tommaso d'Aquino e la fortuna del suo pensiero. Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica* 66(1974) 740-760.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BEING IN ACT, BEING IN POTENCY

In his fourth *Disputatio metaphysica*, sectio 8, Suarez raises the question as to the first division of being: that into finite and Infinite being (as Scotus teaches), the division into the one and the many, or that into *ens per se* and *ens per accidens*. Suarez' opinion is that the division into created and uncreated being comes first. From a Thomist standpoint, however, this is impossible, as God does not come under the *ens commune* which is studied in metaphysics. God is the totally Other, who exceeds all of our concepts. Even if we apply to God the concept "being", our concept nonetheless does not express his intimate reality.

In the view of some Thomists the division into substance (*ens per se*) and accidents is the first and most proper division of being. Being in its proper sense is realized in substance, whereas accidents, because they are additional determinations of substance, are called being in a less proper sense. Upon closer examination, however, it appears that the basis for the distinction between substance and accidents is the division of being into being in act and being in potency; hence the concepts of act and of potency precede those of substance and accidents also from a psychological viewpoint[1].

Act and potency are found in all predicaments[2]. Metaphysics studies act and potency to the extent that the latter follow on the *ens commune* and not as they occur in changeable, material things, even though one can use the analysis of the latter in order to acquire a greater insight into what act and potency mean in being which has been abstracted from matter[3].

The doctrine of act and potency is rightly called the cornerstone of

[1] Cf. *In III Phys.*, lectio 2, n.285: "Potentia et actus, cum sint de primis differentiis entis...."; *In V Metaph.*, l.9,n.889: "...dividit ens per potentiam et actum; et ens sic divisum est communius quam ens perfectum" (i.e., the being of the categories); *In IX Metaph.*, l.1, n.897. *In XI Metaph.*, l.9, n.2289. *SCG* II 54: "Potentia autem et actus dividunt ens commune".

[2] *In V Metaph.*, lectio 9, n.897: "In omnibus enim praedictis quae significant decem praedicamenta, aliquid dicitur in actu et aliquid in potentia".

[3] *In XI Metaph.*, l.1, nn.1770-1: "Sed principalis intentio huius doctrinae non est de potentia et actu secundum quod sunt in rebus mobilibus sed secundum quod sequuntur ens commune. Sed cum dixerimus de potentia, quae est in rebus mobilibus et de actu ei correspondente, ostendere poterimus et de potentia et actu secundum quod sunt in rebus intelligibilibus".

Thomism[4]. St. Thomas accepted one of the most original of Aristotle's contributions to philosophy, elaborated it further and gave it a wider application. One may even say that through the study of act and potency, becoming (in the sense of the possibility of being) has acquired a place in the philosophy of being, although not the becoming of material things qua material.

The necessity of explaining change brought Aristotle to his doctrine of act and potency. In the Greek philosophical world the views of Heraclitus and Parmenides with regard to this problem were directly opposed. Whereas the latter argued that being is necessarily one and unchangeable, Heraclitus considered unlimited change the most profound aspect of reality. Plato's reply to what he called a battle of giants consisted in the acceptance of a world of unchangeable forms, on the one hand, and of an indefinite substrate, a factor of extension and plurality, on the other.

Aristotle developed a definitive answer to the problem of becoming by introducing the concept of primary matter, the totally indeterminate substrate, which makes the transition of one substance into another possible. The coming-into-being of material things is not from a mere absence to the presence of a new form, but from a potentiality to its realization[5]. This potentiality is present in the essence of all material things which can change into one another. In itself it is not something, because in the process of substantial change everything that constitutes a thing, thus all determination, disappears and makes way for the form of the new thing which comes into being. Consequently primary matter is an entirely indeterminate substrate, a component of being which is really present in the essence of material things and makes change possible by being able to become an entirely new formal determination.

Primary matter can never exist on its own, because it is only indeterminacy and possibility of change. It always exists with something else through which it is known. Primary matter itself is not an existing something, but is that by means of which material things exist qua material. It lies, as it were, between a thing and nothingness, and is—to use a well-known Aristotelian term—a "third something", a unique kind of entity which stands between something and nothing. Aristotle transposed his doctrine of primary matter and substantial form (the treatment of which does not belong to metaphysics (this does not study being qua

[4] Cf. G. Manser, *Das Wesen des Thomismus. Die Lehre von Akt und Potenz als tiefste Grundlage der thomistischen Synthese*[2], Fribourg 1935.

[5] *Metaph.* 1049 b 24: ἀεὶ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος γίγνεται τὸ ἐνεργείᾳ ὄν.

material) to the level of the general doctrine of being. In this way the doctrine of act (ἐντελέχεια. ἐνέργεια) and potentiality (δύναμις) originated.

Potentiality

The word δύναμις (of which the Latin equivalent is *potentia*) is an important philosophical term. If we examine its history, it appears that it is used by Homer several times in the sense of "power to do something" (less in the sense of physical strength, as some have interpreted it). In the *Corpus Hippocraticum* the term refers to the characteristic action of a thing. Thus, for example, a favourable wind or condition of the atmosphere has a *dynamis* to bring about good effects in the human body. Illnesses, too, have their own action and properties[6]. Thus *dynamis* began to signify the manifestation of an underlying nature. For the Sophists and Isocrates *dynamis* is the characteristic attribute of things which shows itself in action. In Plato's dialogues it is the property which reveals being: *dynamis* may be a principle of activity or an ability to undergo change, i.e. that by means of which one does or undergoes something; it shows the hidden nature and makes it possible to give a name to things. *Dynamis* flows, as it were, from the essence (οὐσία) of things[7]. In Plato's *Republic* the term refers to what we now understand by faculty: "The faculties are a particular kind of being by means of which we can do what we can do.... With regard to a faculty attention is paid only to that for the sake of which it is and what it brings about"[8].

Aristotle's doctrine of potency is the result of his analysis of becoming and of a critical dialogue with Presocratic philosophers and Plato. The Megarians argued that potency is identical with its realization. Without this actualization there is simply no potency. They arrived at this conclusion because potency cannot be perceived. It is true, Aristotle concedes, that you can only know that a faculty exists when it is active and that its activity allows us to determine its nature. But this does not imply that the faculty only exists when it is being used. Previous to this activity there must be an ability to act, just as previous to change there must be an ability to become a new thing. Without this ability there would neither be any activity nor change[9].

[6] See G. Plamböck, *Dynamis im Corpus Hippocraticum. Abh.d. Akad.d.Wiss., Mainz*, Geistes- u.sozialwiss. Kl.1964, n.2.

[7] Cf. *Theaet.* 156a; *Soph.* 247d.

[8] *Rep.* 477cd. See J. Souilhé, *Etudes sur le terme* δύναμις dans les dialogues de Platon, Paris 1919.

Aristotle defines or describes *dynamis* as follows: "Potentiality means in general the source of change or movement in some other thing, or in the same thing to the extent that it is different, and also the source of a thing being moved by another thing or by itself (to the extent that it is different)"[10]. Aristotle adds that the faculty of doing this well is also called *dynamis*. Since nature does nothing in vain, there cannot be potentiality which is never actualized. Potentiality is an analogous term: it denotes very different types of ability and possibility in the substantial and accidental order. We acquire this concept at the very start of our intellectual life when we experience that we *can* do something and that there is a capacity for change in ourselves and in things. As our command of language develops we express it by means of such words as "can", "may", "possible", "faculty", by the potential mood of the verbs, etc. It has been a stroke of genius of Aristotle to perform an analysis (*resolutio ad universale*) of the instances of potentiality reducing them to an analogous concept. In doing so he remained close to our first experiences of being. In this way "potentiality" is a key concept in our study of reality.

Act

Passing now to the study of act we must make first an observation. Historically the terms ἐντελέχεια and ἐνέργια were invented by Aristotle. Some scholars assume that ἐντελέχεια is formed from three words: ἐν, τέλος, ἔχειν, that is, the attainment of the end (perfection) in oneself[11]. According to others the term is derived form ἐντελῆς (- λῶς) ἔχειν i.e. being completed. Ἐνέργεια was formed on the basis of the already existing ἐνεργός (active) (ἐν ἔργον) and means activity, force, being something. In regard to this term Aristotle writes: "The word act ἐνέργεια which we connect with complete reality, is chiefly transferred from movements to other things: for in the strict sense of the word act is thought to be identical with movement"[12]. Aristotle states here that "to

[9] See G.Verbeke, "The Meaning of Potency in Aristotle", in Lloyd P. Gerson, *Graceful Reason. Essays in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy Presented to Joseph Owens CSSR*, Toronto 1983, 55-74.

[10] *Metaph.* V 12, 1019 a 15ff.

[11] K. von Fritz, *Philosophie und sprachlicher Ausdruck bei Demokrit, Platon und Aristoteles*², Darmstadt 1963, p.66.

[12] *Metaph.* IX (Θ) 3, 1047 a 30.

do something" is the clearest form of act and of a particular degree of reality.

To do something or having become something are in our experience always a realization of something which was possible. For this reason we develop in our first concept, viz. that of being, the distinction between that which truly is (has become, is completed) and that which can still become or act. In daily language the capacity to do or to change is expressed by means of modal forms of verbs (the so-called potential mood) or by an auxiliary verb such as "being able". Only at a later stage do we form the abstract terms "possible", "possibility". We can conceive a doing and a completeness which are not the result of a process of becoming but which always exist in their pure actuality. This is called *actus purus*, pure reality and fulness of being.

In the age of the Renaissance the term energy came into use in Western countries in the sense in which it is found in Aristotle's *Poetics*, namely that of expressive force. Kepler, in 1619, was the first to use the word in its modern sense of physical energy. Around 1840 energy also began to mean latent capacity to work. However, in modern physics the terms energy and matter have an entirely different meaning to that they have in Aristotle.

Act and potentiality

The concepts of act and potentiality are in the first instance correlative. It is true that being, our first concept, is conceived as act, but this is at a level prior to the distinction between act and potentiality. Potentiality can be defined as the possibility or capability of an act (*posse ad actum*), i.e. of a realization and completion. Potentiality has in fact an essential relationship to act, to a completion on a particular level of being. There is not one kind of potentiality, but potentiality is an analogous concept and is found on the various levels of (created) being.

Act as such, however, does not have this necessary, essential relationship to potentiality, —although act in a particular order, viz. in the material world, is always related to potentiality.

Because the material world is the first thing we get to know, we conceive act first of all as the result of a process of becoming. Later we may reach the insight that an act which is not the result of a process of becoming is not only possible but exists necessarily. Act itself cannot be defined, no more than the concept of being, or even less so, since act does not have the duality of "that which is". The concept of act is denoted only

by pointing to concrete instances: act is actual being or actually doing something. Aristotle gives as examples actual building (as distinguished from being able to build) and seeing (as distinguished from being able to see)[13].

Thus it appears that the term act always refers to something existing. Aimé Forest objects that an act limited by potentiality as such, does not pertain to the level of existence, and is nothing else than something abstract, a universal[14]. However, this is a misrepresentation: being is also an abstract concept but it refers nevertheless to the "being real" of something. The universal mode proper to our concept of being does not apply to the reality signified by this concept but to the form which it has in our thinking. It may, however, be said in favour of Forest's view that in material things, which consist of matter and form, the essential form (act) is limited by matter, and that existence belongs to the whole made up of both, rather than to one of the two components. The assertion mentioned above is acceptable in this limited sense, but on condition that it be understood in such a way that in this whole, being (*esse*) is much more closely connected with form than with matter, as will be argued in the next chapter.

The division of act and of potentiality

Act is divided as follows:

a) We distinguish *actus purus*, i.e. pure act, and *actus impurus*, i.e. act which is the act of a potentiality and is limited by it or which contains potentiality in itself and has to be determined further.

b) We distinguish also between *actus primus* and *actus secundus*. The latter presupposes another being on which it depends and which it completes (e.g., an operation presupposes a faculty), whereas the former is a fundamental reality which is to be determined further[15].

c) Finally, act as signifying actual being is divided according to the predicaments.

The divison of potentiality:

a) We distinguish between *potentia logica* and *potentia realis*. The former refers to the objective possibility that something which does not exist may exist. This so-called logical possibility does not imply a *real*

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[13] *Metaph.* 1048 a 37ff.

[14] *La structure métaphysique du concret*², Paris 1956, p.163.

[15] With regard to the distinction between *actus primus* and *actus secundus* see Aristotle, *Protrepticus*, fragm.B 24 (Düring) and *De anima* 412 a 22; 417 b 30.

potentiality in nature (which might be either active or passive), but it is said of a thing considered in itself[16]: it is not impossible for it to exist. St. Thomas uses the terms *possibile esse et non esse* when he refers to this possibility of existing which any essential content possesses if it has no contradictory characteristics (an example of the opposite is a square circle)[17]. Apart from this logical possibility there is also the potentiality really present in things as a constituent element of being (the *potentia realis*).

b) Real potentiality is divided into the power of doing something (*potentia operativa*) and passive potentiality[18]. The latter is the potentiality of receiving something, e.g. the potentiality of becoming a substantial form (this potentiality is called *materia prima*); the potentiality of the *suppositum* (the substance) in regard to the act of being, and finally the potentiality of substance in regard to its accidental determinations. The potentiality to acquire a substantial form is potentiality in its fullest sense: primary matter itself has no determination whatever[19]. —The active potency of bringing about an effect presupposes a subject in which it is inherent. This subject is determined by this faculty and related to it as a passive potentiality (to the extent that it is determined by it)[20]. Active potency is capable of a degree of self-determination, whereas passive potency is determined exclusively from without[21].

Hegel also speaks of possibility, but his logical possibility absorbs real possibility and views both as at the same time identical and in contradiction with themselves due to the multiplicity of other things contained in them[22]. It is true that Aquinas uses the expression *potentia contradictionis* to indicate that a material being which now has this particular content can become something else. But we must realize that the expression "it is potentially not-being" does not denote a *real* potency to not-being but has a logical sense which depends on the fact

[16] *De potentia*, q.1, a.3: "...non secundum aliquam potentiam sed secundum seipsum, sicut dicimus possibile quod non est impossibile esse, et impossibile dicimus quod necesse est non esse".

[17] See below chapter XIV.

[18] *De potentia*, q.1, a.1: "Duplex est potentia: una activa cui respondet actus qui est operatio; et huic primo nomen potentiae videtur fuisse attributum; alia est potentia passiva, cui respondet actus primus qui est forma ad quam similiter videtur secundario nomen potentiae devolutum".

[19] *In XII Metaph.*, l.2, n.2438.

[20] *In IV Sent.*, d.7, q.2, a.1, ql.3.

[21] See H.P. Kainz, "The Thomistic Doctrine of Potency", in *Divus Thomas* 73(1970) 308-320.

[22] *Wissenschaft der Logik* II (Theorie Werkausg., p.209).

that matter is in a state of potentiality with regard to other forms[23]. This potentiality is found only in material things; hence the Thomist *potentia contradictionis* does not pertain to metaphysics, which abstracts from material being qua material. Moreover, this potentiality of matter is a potentiality to another form and the possibility of losing the form now present in it. However, it is not a potentiality of not-being as such. Accordingly not-being is not enclosed in it, as Hegel asserts it is.

Principles expressing the relation of act and potentiality to being

St. Thomas uses a number of principles in order to illustrate the nature and function of act and potentiality in relation to being:

a) A first insight is that "everything that exists is either pure act or else consists of act and potency which are its essential components". This assertion states that act and potency are our key to the understanding of reality. —The thesis is derived, on the one hand, from the fact that what is real is act, on the other hand from the changes and multiplicity of things: if change is the transition from one being to another, the possibility of change must needs be present, whereby this thing can change and become different. This possibility lies in the thing which changes. To assume that the new being takes the place of its predecessor in such a way, that it is just there at a given moment, would mean that one accepts the position of the School of Megara, a position which was refuted by Aristotle: in the Megarian view there no longer exists a connection between things nor any explanation as to why they have come into being. Man himself becomes a collection of actions which do not proceed from him, and he is no longer his own being.

It is also necessary to assume that things are composed of act and potentiality in order to explain their multiplicity: an act on its own would only be one concentration of reality, would only be itself, with the result that no further multiplication would be possible. But if there is real multiplicity, —as there actually are many people, many good and beautiful things—, then the act of being can only be multiplied, if it is on each occasion received and limited by the subjects which possess it. Consequently, in the existing thing there must be a composition of act and potency. We can, however, also conceive a pure act of being which

[23] On *potentia contradictionis* see *In IX Metaph.*, l.9, n.1869. Cf. *De potentia*, q.5, a.3: "Materia enim cum non possit esse sine forma non potest esse in potentia ad non esse nisi quatenus existens sub una forma est in potentia ad aliam formam". See also I 104, 3 and 4.

possesses the entire contents of being in complete unity, in other words, a pure act. In Part Two it will be shown that this pure act exists necessarily.

b) "Potentiality cannot exist by itself alone, because it is not something. It can only belong to, be a component of the being of existing things". As has become clear the concept of potency is an extremely difficult one; we know it in a negative manner: potency is not something; potency is indeterminate. Accordingly, it is not surprising that potency has frequently been misunderstood in the history of philosophy. A current misconception is that of viewing potency as one and the same thing (e.g. as a kind of matter spread throughout the universe), of which a larger or smaller quantity would be present in the various things. However, we can only speak of a multiplicity of potencies which are ordered to the various acts. Reduction to one potency is absolutely impossible. Potency is an analogous concept[24].

Act and potentiality in the later history of philosophy

The distinction between matter and substantial form, the existing subject and its being as well as that between the first and the second act can only be grasped on the basis of a philosophical analysis of reality and cannot be attained with the aid of a mathematical or scientific approach to things, as the latter approach is not on the level of being. It is not surprising, then, that Descartes criticized the doctrine of primary matter and substantial form and followed another path[25] or that J.-P. Sartre rejected the concept of potency because it cannot be further defined. His refusal to accept potency coincides with his view that being-in-itself does not change, remains closed and does not communicate itself. — Other philosophersers, among whom Hegel, do use the terms act and potency, but they give them a different meaning. Hegel turns act and potency into the affirmation and negation of the mind. Spencer, Bergson and others incline towards making pure becoming the basic category of reality. Heidegger repeatedly speaks of the possible. In *Sein und Zeit* he distinguishes between: (1) the possibility which concerns man, i.e. that which man strives to realize. This is possibility in the strict sense of the term; (2) the capacity of the *Dasein* to be its own projected possibilities. This is an ability exclusively proper to man; (3) finally, there is the power

[24] Cf. Caietan, *In Primam Partem Summae theol.*, q.75, a.6.
[25] *Lettre à Regius* (Adam et Tannery, III, p.502).

to render possible (*ermöglich*en) all possibles. —A degree of development seems to have taken place in Heidegger's view of the possible. Before the *Kehre* he viewed possibility in the perspective of the *Dasein*, while later he placed it more in the perspective of Being[26]. The differing conceptions of potency make it clear that it is extremely difficult to understand the term correctly. It is important in regard to this concept not to force our own views on reality, but to form our concepts by patient study in harmony with what reality shows us.

The mutual relationship of act and potency

With regard to the mutual relationship of act and potency St. Thomas uses the following principles:

a) In respect of the perfection of being: "Every being is perfect to the extent that it is in act, imperfect to the extent that it is in potency"[27]. This follows clearly from the content of the concepts of act and potency: that which is, is real, is act; potency, on the other hand, is potentiality to an act. "In every genus, act is more excellent than potency in regard to that genus"[28]. In another genus potency can sometimes be more perfect than the act which does not pertain to this genus. The human intellect, which is a potency, is more noble than the form of a stone; substance is more noble than a secondary accidental determination, although substance is a potential substrate in regard to such a determination. —Pure act is completely and entirely perfect.

b) As regards causality: "Nothing acts except insofar as it is in act"[29], "it undergoes to the extent that it is in potency" [30]. —This principle is obvious if one considers the meaning of the terms act and potency.— "That which is in potency is not brought to act except by a being which is in act"[31]. To bring about an effect an agent is necessary. However, an agent acts only when really (*actu*) acting. The insight formulated by this

[26] See his *Brief über den Humanismus* (1947); *Sein und Zeit*, 43ff.; 144; R. Kearney, "Heideger, le possible et Dieu", in R. Kearney and St. O'Leary (edit.), *Heidegger et la question de Dieu*, Paris 1980, 125-167.
[27] *SCG* I 28.
[28] *In II Sent.*, d.44, q.1 ad 2.
[29] *SCG* I 28.
[30] I 25, 1 ad 1.
[31] I 3, 1. —Hegel contradicts this principle when he says that the possible can make itself real. Cf. his *Wissenschaft der Logik*, II (Theorie Werkausg.,p.210): "Diese Bewegung der sich selbst aufhebenden realen Möglichkeit bringt also dieselben schon vorhandenen Momente hervor, nur jedes aus dem anderen werdend; sie ist daher in dieser Negation auch nicht ein Übergehen, sondern ein Zusammengehen mit sich selbst". Cf. B. Lakebrink, *Hegels dialektische Ontologie und die thomistische Analektik*, Ratingen 1968, 185ff.

principle can also be expressed as follows: "Whatever moves (changes), is moved by something else", i.e. is brought to that reality, which is the terminus of this change. A thing which, in respect of a particular form, does not have this determination, cannot give this determination to itself (since it does not possess it), but must receive it from something else.

Whatever changes, consists of act and potency, because in order to change, something must exist and must also be in a state of potentiality with regard to what it becomes through this change.—In the process of becoming potency precedes act in the subject which is brought from potency to act. In absolute terms act precedes, because in the last analysis something which is real must be the source and cause of the being and the essential content of things.

c) With regard to the real distinction between act and potency the following principles can be formulated: in a changeable being, act and potency are really distinct from one another: potency is that which is not yet act, but which can become determination and reality, whereas act is already determination of a thing and is real. A thing which has a precise content and that which is not yet determined are really distinct. We conclude from this fact that in the same order of being something cannot at the same time be act and potency. In different orders this is possible. Thus, for example, substance is act in the substantial order, but it is in potency to accidental determinations. —Because a thing is only one being, it is impossible for two things which are act to constitute one being. This axiom is of great significance in Thomistic anthropology, for it implies the unity of man's formal principle.

d) "As act is perfection it can only be limited by a potency". —The principle stated here is one of the most important theses in Aquinas' doctrine of being. It is the basis of the so-called Fourth Way to demonstrate God's existence. From a historical viewpoint we must associate this principle with Plotinus' doctrine that an act has no limitation and seeks to fill everything with itself[32]. In Aristotle's philosophy primary matter did not have the function of limiting substantial forms, but was merely the possibility of substantial change. Substantial forms are limited in his view by what they are. St. Thomas, however, developed the doctrine of act and potency further and placed it in the light of his metaphysics of being, with the result that form and matter received a broader meaning: an act can only be limited by a potency really distinct

[32] See *Enneads* IV 8, 6.

from it[33]. This thesis rests on the following insight: act is in itself perfection and realization. No limitation is involved in acts and perfections such as love or knowledge. Love and knowledge imply a completeness. If they are in fact limited, this limitation cannot come from the perfection love or knowledge are, but only from something which receives these perfections in a limitative fashion. If formal perfections such as love or knowledge were at the same time to bear a limitation in themselves, they would contain a contradiction. Accordingly the formal perfections which we know and which are actually limited are so not due to themselves, but due to the potency with which they are connected or the subject in which they are included. "We observe that no act is limited except by a potency which receives it. We observe that forms are limited according to the potency of matter. Thus if the First Mover is act without any potency being added to it, —because he is not the form of any body..., it is necessary that he himself be infinite"[34].

[33] See N. Clarke, "The Limitation of Act by Potency: Aristotelianism or Neoplatonism?", in *The New Scholasticism* 26(1952)167-194.

[34] *Compendium theologiae*, 18. In a different sense we may speak of the "limitation" of a potency by an act. For instance, of primary matter by a substantial form or of the faculties by the *species cognoscibiles*, inasmuch as these potencies are now determined by this particular form. See F. Kovach, "St. Thomas Aquinas: Limitation of Potency by Act. A Textual and Doctrinal Analysis", in *Atti del VIII Congresso Internazionale dell'Accademia Pontificia di San Tommaso d'Aquino*, V, Città del Vaticano 1982, 387-411.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE REAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN ESSENCE AND BEING

The subject of metaphysics is common being (*ens commune*), i.e. being in its generality and not any particular class of beings. The concept "common being" is an abstraction because existing things are always of a determinate nature and are not being in a general sense[1]. The abstract concept of common being is formed by the intellect as a result of its contact with and knowledge of the reality of things. However, to acquire this concept a negative judgment must intervene, namely the insight that it is not necessary that being exists in matter. Common being signifies the whole of created beings, as these are the things we experience and deal with. God does not come under common being, for he is the entirely Other, about whom we can know that he exists, but not what he is. God is the cause of common being, i.e. the cause of the reality of all the concrete beings which we denote by means of the abstract concept of common being[2].

Groping for insight into the distinction between essence and being

Up to now we have studied being and its attributes, the first principles of being and the fundamental division of being into act and potency. At this juncture we must reflect on the most profound nature of common being. As we have seen, a certain duality is involved in the concept of being (*ens*); the act of being (*esse*) is the most formal element of this concept. In the Indo-European languages the verb 'to be' expresses various forms and ways of being real. It is, however, remarkable that in the classical period of Greek philosophy we find nowhere an analysis of being as existence. Only later did the verbs ὑποστῆναι and ὑπάρχειν come into use with this meaning.

The distinction between essence and existence was, of course, well-known. Aristotle himself, in the *Posterior Analytics* II 7, makes the famous statement that what a man is and being a man are not the same[3], but he does not consider the essence and being (*esse*) as really distinct in the existing thing. Greek thinkers fail to raise the question as to why there is being at all and not nothing[4]. They experience the cosmos as the always existing reality. In Christianity, on the other hand, the dogma of creation is of paramount importance: the being of the world depends on God's free decision to make it, so that the existence of all things is contingent. In agreement with this position Aquinas studies expressly the question of the causes of being (*esse*)[5] to reach the conclusion that all beings come from God: "Being *qua* being is caused by God himself"[6].

In non-Christian philosophies the understanding of the cause and meaning of things is at best vague. Heidegger, for instance, asks continually why there is not just nothing, forgetting that this position is unthinkable[7]. St. Thomas holds that in all beings (i.e. in created things) there is a duality of the essence and the act of being (*esse*) which constitute two distinct components of the one being (*ens*). When we speak here of 'essence', we do not mean abstract general essence as it is expressed in the definition of things, but the essential contents of individually existing things. Needless to say that the general essence is contained in them, not in its generality but with regard to its content. The Scholastic term to denote 'essence' as used in this way is *suppositum*. As this term has no equivalent in English we use 'essence' in this particular sense, for which, moreover, we find some support in Aquinas' own vocabulary[8].

If we look for possible historical antecedents of St. Thomas' doctrine of essence and being *(esse)*, mention should be made of the distinction between ὕπαρξις and οὐσία found in Philo's works. Philo apparently follows the use of the philosophical language in his own time[9]. In some of St. Augustine's works there are indications of a groping search for the formulation of the doctrine of the real distinction between essence and being: God is the being to whom existence belongs most and in the truest manner; the human soul does not possess a being (*esse*) which is also 'being powerful' or 'being just', but God is being which is also 'being

[1] See *SCG* I 26: "Id quod commune est vel universale sine additione esse non potest sed sine additione consideratur".
[2] *Expos. in Dionysii De divinis nominibus*, c.5, l.2.

[3] See also *De anima* 429 b 11.
[4] In his *Einführung in die Metaphysik* Heidegger considers this questions to be of primary importance, but this is not correct. See A. Zimmermann, "Die Grundfrage in der Metaphysik des Mittelalters", in *Archiv f.Gesch. der Philos.*47(1967) 141-156.
[5] *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 1, n.533.
[6] *In VI Metaph.*, l.3, n.1220: "Ens inquantum ens habet causam ipsum Deum".
[7] See the essay of A. Zimmermann quoted in n.4.
[8] *De ente et essentia*, c.2.
[9] *De post. Caini* 169.

powerful' and 'being just'[10]. In another text St. Augustine expresses the distinction between God and creatures even more sharply. God is simple, but creatures are composed of matter and form[11]. Even angels have this "matter"[12]. St. Augustine's view is probably inspired by a text of the *Book of Wisdom* 11,18: "...who has made the world from formless dust". St. Thomas makes this insight his own: he shows that creatures are necessarily composite, but the components of their being are not those mentioned by St. Augustine.

Several texts from Boethius are also of great importance for the development of the doctrine of the real distinction between essence and being. In his *De hebdomadibus* this Christian thinker writes that being and that which is are different. Being (*esse*) is not yet, but is only when it takes the form of being (*accepta forma essendi*). That which is may participate in something, but being (*esse*) itself does not participate at all ..., it has nothing else added to itself... In every composite thing, being is something different to "it is". In whatever is simple its being and that which it is are one[13]. At first sight Boethius seems to express the same doctrine as St. Thomas; in fact he is saying something different. As Pierre Hadot so rightly observes, in some Neoplatonic circles we find the doctrine of a distinction between Being and that which is; while Being corresponds to the first hypostasis, that which is corresponds to the second; hence that which is exists only later. Boethius, however, speaks of all existing things instead of a second hypostasis and to this extent his theory differs from the Neoplatonic view. His distinction between being itself and that which is was of great importance to mediaeval scholars[14].

The Arab philosophers Farabi and Avicenna formulated clearly the distinction between essence and existence in creatures[15]. St. Thomas

[10] *De Trinitate* 5, 2, 3. On Augustine's concept of being see J.F. Anderson *St. Augustine and Being. A Metaphysical Essay*, The Hague 1965, pp.5ff.: rather than being Platonic Augustine's concept of being is inspired by Holy Scripture: being is perfect. God is not above being (as some Neo-Platonists argued), but he is Being itself.

[11] *De Genesi ad litt.* 1, 15, 29.

[12] *De civ.Dei* 12, 15; *Conf.* 12, 9.

[13] *PL* 64, 1311 BC: "Diversum est esse et id quod est. Ipsum enim esse nondum est. At vero accepta essendi forma est atque consistit. Quod est participare aliquo potest, sed ipsum esse nullo modo participat...Id quod est, habere aliquid praeterquam quod ipsum esse, potest; ipsum vero esse nihil aliud praeter se habet admixtum...; omni composito aliud est esse, aliud ipsum est. Omne simplex esse suum et id quod est unum habet".

[14] Cf. P. Hadot, "La distinction de l'être et de l'étant dans le 'De Hebdomadibus' de Boèce", in *Miscellanea mediaevalia, 2: Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter*. Vorträge des 2. intern. Kongreß für mittelalt. Philos., Berlin 1963, pp.147-153.

[15] See A.-M. Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sinà*, Paris 1937, 131-134.

himself recognizes the influence of Avicenna on his thought when he writes: "Everything which has its being from another is not a necessary being through itself, as Avicenna shows. Consequently possible being (*possibilitas*) means dependence on that by which it is"[16]. The great Arab philosopher Averroes, however, sharply rejected this doctrine of Avicenna and noted that Avicenna makes being and the unity of things into predicates which are added to them from the exterior, as if they were accidents[17].

Even if it is true that Avicenna expresses himself as if being is attributed to the essence as an accident[18], he understands being not as an accident of the same kind as the predicamental accidents, but as something given to nature by God's action which makes that the essences exist[19]. St. Thomas teaches, on the contrary, that being is a substantial predicate, i.e. it belongs to the order of substance, although not to its essence[20]. There is another fundamental difference between Avicenna's concept of being and that of Thomas: in his attempt of grasping being in its purity Avicenna posits a being which precedes the division into "necessary being through itself" (God) and "necessary being through something else" (the world). In this way, however, he makes the concept of being precede God and fails to recognize the analogical character of being. M.-D. Philippe points out that the being which Avicenna studies in metaphysics is universal being and not being itself[21]. In Aquinas' thought, on the other hand, the reality and perfection of being are primordial; God does not come under the concept of being.

William of Auvergne accepts Avicenna's distinction between being and essence and uses it as a criterion to distinguish God from creatures: God is the being in which being and essence are the same; everything outside God is composite in one way or another[22].—Authors of the

[16] *In II Sent.*, d.8, q.3, a.2.

[17] *In IV Metaph.*, comm.3, f.32: "Avicenna autem multum peccavit in hoc quod existimavit quod unum et ens significant dispositiones additas essentiae rei".

[18] Cf. *Metaph.*, tract. V, c.2,f.87 (Venetiae 1508): "Dicemus ergo quod naturae hominis ex hoc quod est homo, accidat ut habeat esse".

[19] See E. Gilson, *L'être et l'essence*, p.128.

[20] See J. Owens, "The Accidental and Essential Character of Being in the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas", *Mediaeval Studies* XX (1958) 1-40; A. Pattin, *De verhouding tussen zijn en wezenheid en de transcendentele relatie in de 2e helft der XIII*eeuw*. Verhandeling n.21 van de Koninkl.Vlaamse Akad., Kl.Lett., Brussel 1955.

[21] *Une philosophie de l'être est-elle encore possible? II. Significations de l'être*, Paris 1975, p.51. Cf. also his *Le problème de l'ens et de l'esse: Avicenne et Saint Thomas*, Paris 1975, pp.21-23.

[22] *Opera* I, 852: "Et omne aliud ens (excepto Deo) est quodammodo compositum ex eo quod est et ex eo quo est, sive esse suo sive entitate sua, quemadmodum album est album ex subiecto et albedine".

Franciscan School in Paris emphasize the dependence of creatures on God but do not formulate the distinction between essence and the act of being[23].

The insights mentioned here scarcely appear to go beyond the doctrine of the participation of all things in God: needless to say, all scholastic theologians accept that being is not necessarily contained in the essence of creatures, since otherwise the latter would be independent of God. Some statements from the *Liber de causis* quoted by Aquinas also must be understood against the backdrop of this theory of participation[24].

Aquinas' doctrine of the real distrinction

Several texts in the works of St. Thomas demonstrate the real distinction between essence and being (*suppositum* and *esse*) in all (created) things. These different proofs can be divided into three groups.

I

A first argument is based on the manner in which we conceive the essence of something. In order to know a thing, such as a plant or an animal, we have to know the characteristics of its essence. But we are aware that existence does not come under these. It follows that existence is not in the essence as one of its attributes but is added to it. St. Thomas himself formulates this proof as follows: "Everything which does not belong to the concept of the essence or the whatness is added to it from without and constitutes with the essence a composite thing, because no essence can be thought without the things which are its essential components. This being so, every essence or every whatness can be conceived even if we do not think of its reality. I can know what a man or a phoenix is and nonetheless be in ignorance with regard to the question of whether they exist in nature. Hence it is clear that being is something different from the essence or whatness, unless perhaps a thing exists, of which the whatness is its being; and this thing can only be unique and a first reality... Hence it is necessary that in every other thing outside of this (first reality) its being is something other than its whatness or its form"[25].

[23] See Alexander of Hales, *Summa theol.*, IIa, inq.1, tr.2, q.3, c.3,a.1: "Eo quod nullum creatum est sua essentia nec a se habet esse sed aliunde dependet".

[24] *Liber de causis*, prop.9. Cf. St. Thomas, *In Libr. de causis*, lectio 9; *De ente et essentia*, c.4; *In II Sent.*, d.3, q.1, a.1, obj.6.

[25] *De ente et essentia*, c.5.

This argument is based on the fact that our concept of the essence of a material being is derived from precisely this particular being and that hence the content of our concept (*res concepta*) exists in reality. This is due to the particular nature of human knowledge: the intellect is in a state of potentiality in regard to knowledge and is fertilized and determined by the intelligibility of things, i.e. by their formal content. Although things like water, wood, animals... convey in the first instance their accidental properties, they also manifest their respective essences in this communication, even if in most cases they do so in a wider, generic concept[26]. Now it appears that the being of something is not contained in its essence, the knowledge of which we nonetheless draw from the thing itself. Hence being lies apparently outside the essence[27].

This argument of Aquinas is rejected by some Thomists. Gilson asserts that it does not show that existence is added to essence as a distinct *actus essendi* by means of which things are intrinsically composite[28]. His view is that all arguments in favour of the real distinction between being and essence presuppose the insight into the concept of being as *actus essendi*[29]. Others do not go so far and hold that the argument is valid provided it is taken in conjunction with the insight that there is only one being, the essence of which is existence[30].

Although this association is possible and strengthens the argument, the demonstration taken on its own is, nonetheless, a valid proof, if we consider that the modes of predication also express the modes of being. In this way it is also an example of the use of the so-called logical method in metaphysics[31].

II

A second proof sets out from the *contingency* of being. This contingency is emphasized in modern existentialism, in particular by J.-P. Sartre and

[26] The *possum intelligere* of the text of the *De ente et essentia* denotes a generic knowledge of the essence of things; therefore the statement does not contradict those passages where Aquinas writes that the essence of things remains unknown to us.

[27] See U. Degl'Innocenti, "La distinzione reale nel *De ente et essentia*", in *Doctor communis* 31 (1978), pp.20-28.

[28] *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, (Mentor Omega Edition) 1963, p.139.

[29] *O.c.*, p.142.

[30] See John F. Wippel, "Aquinas' Route to the Real Distinction. A Note on the *De ente et essentia*", *The Thomist* 43(1979) 279-295. Cf. J. Owens, "Quiddity and Real Distinction in St. Thomas Aquinas", in *Mediaeval Studies* 27(1965) 1-22. According to Owens the argument only yields a distinction between concepts.

[31] See James B. Reichman, "Logic and the Method of Metaphysics", in *The Thomist* 29(1965)341-395.

M. Merleau-Ponty: things are "too much"; they have no reason to exist[32]. The contingency of material beings is taught already by Plato and Aristotle: according to Plato material things possess being only in a less real sense, whereas the Ideas constitute reality proper. Aristotle divides the world into the area of the perishable (the sublunar, central part of the universe) and the area of necessary, material beings. The latter cannot be other than they are, whereas sublunar things can also not be. However, in *Metaph.* XII, 7 he distinguishes between two forms of necessity: the heavenly bodies are necessary in a limited manner and move locally, the First Unmoved Mover, on the other hand, is absolutely necessary. The existence of the world as a whole is presupposed and is obviously necessary.

Avicenna, on the other hand, raised the question as to how the being of things is related to God. His anwer was that only God exists through Himself (*per se necesse est*)[33]. In themselves creatures are possible essences which are, as it were, indifferent toward being. Nonetheless they are necessarily produced by the Creator[34]. —Whereas Avicenna teaches the distinction between essence and existence, Averroes rejects this distinction and reproaches Avicenna for introducing theological data into philosophy. He himself returns to Aristotle's theory and makes being coincide with essence: things which have primary matter in their essence, are transitory and contingent. If not, they are necessary. The universe in its entirety is not contingent, but necessary[35].

St. Thomas uses the term "contingent" to denote created material causes which do not produce their effects necessarily. He also calls the human act of will contingent to the extent that it is not necessary and that the will could have chosen something else.Finally, the term contingent also refers to those material things which are perishable. These have the potentiality not to be[36]. Besides this St. Thomas also speaks of a manner of viewing things which looks at things as they depend on God, who

[32] *L'être et le néant*, p.127; *La nausée*, p.163: "Nous étions un tas d'existants, embarrassés de nous-mêmes; nous n'avions pas la moindre raison d'être là, ni les uns ni les autres". "L'essentiel c'est la contingence. Je veux dire que, par définition, l'existence n'est pas la necessité. Exister, c'est être là simplement. Les existants apparaissent..., mais on ne peut jamais les déduire". See also M. Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, p.191: "La contingence de tout ce qui est, c'est la condition d'une vue métaphysique du monde". Cf. J. Gevaert, *Contingentie en noodzakelijk bestaan volgens Thomas van Aquino*. Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Kl.d.Lett., Jr.27, nr.58, Brussel 1965.

[33] *Metaph.* I, c.7.

[34] *O.c.*, IV c.2.

[35] *In XII Metaph.*, text.41.

[36] *De potentia*, q.5, a.3 ("potentia ad non esse").

does not create necessarily[37]. In this sense all creatures are contingent.

Against this background of contingency in the world the following argument may be drawn up: that which is perishable or contingent does not have its existence from itself. If this were the case, there would be no reason why beings can lose their existence or why they do not necessarily exist. If something does not have being from itself, it has it as added to its own essence, i.e. it consists of two components.

Discarding this reasoning philosophers of a Suarezian turn of mind suggest that a contingently realized thing is simply contingent and that no composition is necessary to explain this contingency. But in the light of the doctrine of act and potency this objection dissolves: being means realization. If one considers being itself, it is incomprehensible why a limited, contingent realization should occur. For being means realization. As such it denotes reality without any limitation; it is necessary *per se*, because it is simply realization. Some existentialists rightly hold that contingent being which as they say is not dependent on a cause, is deprived of meaning. But because we accept the thesis that things are meaningful, we must explain why the being of perishable and non-necessary things is contingent. It is apparently so because it is received in and united to a potency. In other words, it is ordained to a potency which requires a limited, contingent realization.

St. Thomas' proof of the real distinction of essence and the act of being as based on the contingency of creatures is formulated as follows: something which does not have being from itself is not its own being, but has being. No contingent thing has being from itself. Thus in contingent things being and essence (essence in the sense of suppositum) are really distinct. This train of thought can be more easily understood if we consider that something that is being by itself never loses it, but possesses it essentially. Perishable things manifestly do not have being by themselves. The Third of the Five Ways by means of which man comes to the insight that God exists, presents the same proof inasmuch as it concludes that the (perishable) things which cannot have their existence through themselves have an outside cause, owing to which they exist[38].

We also come across the following formulation: "Because everything which has something not from itself is possible in regard to this something, an essence of this kind will be possible in regard to its being... and thus potency and act are found in this essence to the extent that this

[37] *L.c.*: "Si rerum universitas consideratur prout sunt a primo principio".

[38] I 2, 3.

essence itself is possible and its being is its act"[39]. In the works of St. Thomas the following concise formulation is frequently found: "Every created thing has its being through another; otherwise it would not be caused. Of no created substance being is the substance[40]. This formulation only apparently depends on the introduction of the concept "created things", because it results just as much from the insight that the things which we see around us do not possess being by themselves. Needless to say, this proof does not give us any insight as to whether in imperishable things being and essence are really separate from one another. In order to solve this problem we must demonstrate that the being which has being by itself and thus necessarily exists can only be one, or we must combine the demonstration with the following argument.

III

A third proof sets out from the unity and multiplicity of things: if something were identical with its own being, it could never exist in a multiplicity of kinds and individuals. The thought underlying this argument is the following: being as such means fullness of realization and concentration of reality and perfection in unity. Multiplicity and multiplication can only occur due to a potential, limitative factor[41]. Therefore St. Thomas writes that all things which are substance cannot be their own being: "Otherwise such a thing could not be different in being from those things with which it coincides as regards the formal content of its essence"[42]. If a substance were to be its own essence, it would be a universe of its own without any community with other things. One could no longer understand why there is more than one substance in a genus.

This proof may also be called the argument from the limitation of created being: wherever a particular, limited way of being is realized, being is received in a subject which limits it[43]. The essence which is its own being is unlimited fullness of being and can only be one[44].

In the *Quaestio disputata de potentia* this proof is formulated as

[39] *In I Sent.*, d.8, q.5, a.2. In the previous chapter the principle was mentioned according to which an act is not limited by itself but by a potency really distinct from it.

[40] *SCG* II 52.

[41] See the last section of the previous chapter.

[42] *De veritate* q.27, a.1 ad 8: "Omne quod est in genere substantiae est compositum reali compositione eo quod id quod est in praedicamento substantiae est in suo esse subsistens et oportet quod esse suum sit aliud quam ipsum. Alias non posset differre secundum esse ab illis cum quibus convenit in ratione suae quidditatis".

[43] *De potentia* q.1, a.2.

[44] *SCG* II 52; *S.Th.* I 3, 5 and 11, 3 & 4.

follows: If something is common to several things, it cannot belong to them by itself, because these things differ from one another and hence, if one considers them in themselves, there can be nothing in common between them[45]. "Since being is common to all things which in regard to what they are, are distinct from one another, it must necessarily be attributed to them not from themselves, but due to some cause which must be one"[46]. This argument proceeds from our perception of a multiplicity of things, which is not an absolute diversity, because the things do have something in common; each is a being. "Having in common" cannot be explained (in other words, there would be multiplicity without any community) if each of the things were only itself. This would result in pure multiplicity and diversity without anything in common. However, things have being in common, a fact which is very obvious. Hence being must come to them from without.

By means of this profound argumentation St. Thomas also solved the problem of how the diversity and multiplicity of things are to be explained. Various answers have been given to this question in the history of philosophy: some thinkers, for example the Ionians, postulated a substantial unity and reduced multiplicity and difference to something accidental; Parmenides drew up the thesis of the strict unity of being; being must be identical with itself; his successors again introduced a degree of differentiation into this homogeneity (elements, atoms of varying shape and at varying distances from one another...) Plato resorted to the Idea of the Other (*Sophistes*), the Limit (*Philebus*), Space or the Receptacle (*Timaeus*) and the Indeterminate Duality (unwritten doctrine), in order to explain multiplicity and difference.

Aristotle accepts a diversity of elements and heavenly spheres, which are manifestly dependent on their natural places in the universe. According to him the categories of being cannot be reduced to one another; by rejecting the doctrine of participation Aristotle lost the possibility of explaining the unity and the community present in nature.

St. Thomas' explanation of multiplicity was rejected by Scotus and Suarez: in their view a thing is finite or infinite intrinsically, through itself. Scotus speaks of a *modus intrinsecus* of being which makes it finite or infinite[47]. Suarez rejects even this mode as superfluous. Spinoza argues that two substances cannot differ from one another and reduces

[45] Aquinas is referring to the *order* of being: as *a being* each of them is on its own and is a closed reality.

[46] *De potentia*, q.3, a.5.

[47] *Opus Oxon.* I 8, 3.

multiplicity to unity, while Leibniz, on the other hand, accepts irreducible diversity among his monads. As this survey shows St. Thomas' solution is original and unique.

Being and essence as the components of created things

The proofs given above have the contingency and multiplicity of things as their point of departure: 'not being necessary by itself' presupposes, as does the multiplicity of beings, that being is received in a potency really distinct from it. In this way it is a participation in the independent, pure being of God[48].

Consequently common being studied in metaphysics is composed of two principles really distinct from one another. A purely logical distinction between components which in reality coincide, cannot explain the multiplicity and the contingency of things. How then is this composition to be seen? It would be utterly incorrect to view the act of being (*esse*) and essence as two *things* which together constitute being (*ens*), since that unity which a being is, could never arise from two *things*. The unity of a composite thing is only possible if both parts are related to one another as are act and potency. Thus we must not speak here of two *things*, as Cajetan does[49], but of components (*entia quo*) which themselves are not being but through which the being they constitute exists.

The essence alone is not a being, since it does not exist; but neither is the act of being (*esse*) that which exists[50]. Hence we speak of essence and of existence as two components of being, which are related to one another as are potency and act. In this way they are able to form one being. Like matter is determined by form, essence is brought to reality by the act of being[51]. The great difference, however, is that matter does not determine the substantial form (except to the extent that it limits it to the individual subject), but the essence does determine the nature of the act of being (at least in a sense: being is adjusted to it). Its realization is this concrete, existing thing. The act of being is received, limited and determined by the essence. Being (*esse*) which is not ordained to and received in an essence has no limitation and possesses the plenitude of being. Here we discover the most profound difference between God and

[48] *In VIII Phys.*, l.21; *S.Th. I 44, 1.*

[49] *Comment. in De ente et essentia*, V, n.100.

[50] See L. Dewan, "St. Thomas, Capreolus and Entitative Composition", in *Divus Thomas*, 1977, 355-375.

[51] I 3, 4: "Oportet...quod ipsum esse comparetur ad essentiam, quae est aliud ab ipso, sicut actus ad potentiam".

creatures: God is the shoreless ocean of being, who is all being in its greatest intensity and extent. Creatures, on the other hand, are a determination and a limitation of being due to their ever-differing essences which do not possess being from themselves, but must receive it through participation in God's being. Hence God is being through himself, while creatures are beings which have received their existence from another.

Essence and being are related to one another as are potency and act. If we use this terminology, we must avoid considering both components as principles independent of one another. In the past the terminology of essence and existence has at times led to an incorrect view, namely that the act of being is added to the essence as it were from the outside as a kind of extra gift. In reality being and essence cannot be divided and are always found together: being realizes a particular essence, while this essence possesses and "exercises" existence as its most profound act. St. Thomas states expressly that being is the *actus essentiae* and that the essence or whatness itself is created together with its being[52]. When God gives being He creates at the same time the subject which receives this being. Since, as stated above, the act of being (*esse*) does not exist whereas a being (*ens*) does, a being is that which is real in the first instance and its being (*esse*) and essence are only real within this whole, although being (*esse*) is the component which makes it exist. It should be evident that the composition of being and essence is of an order totally different from a composition of quantitative parts.

The manner in which being and essence are related to one another causally has been the subject of much discussion. Gilson is inclined to speak of a relationship of efficient causality, since being realizes essence. Other Thomists understand the well-known texts of St. Thomas on the *esse* as the act of the existing form and as the reality (*actualitas*) of all acts and of all forms[53] in the sense that they ascribe a degree of formal causality to the esse[54].

Apparently the causality of the *esse* in regard to the essence is unique and lies as it were behind and above the four kinds of causality in the physical order. It seems best, at least in our view, to speak here of a metaphysical causality which bears in itself something both of efficient and of formal causality. Moreover, it is less correct to say that the essence

[52] *De potentia*, q.3, a.5 ad 2: "Ipsa quidditas creatur simul cum esse...Deus dans esse simul producit id quod esse recipit".

[53] *De potentia*, q.9, a.2 ad 9: "Actualitas omnium actuum"; "Ipsum esse est actualitas omnium rerum et etiam formarum".

[54] See E. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, pp.169ff.

"determines" the *esse*, unless in the sense that the act of being is adapted to precisely this essence. The act of being does not properly speaking receive its degree of perfection from the essence.

Existing beings are divided according to the predicaments. Being is attributable to things to the extent that they pertain to one of the predicaments[55].

The real distinction and the revelation of God's name

Is St. Thomas' doctrine of the real distinction between being and essence dependent on the prior acknowledgment that God is self-subsistent being itself (*ipsum esse per se subsistens*)? Gilson replies in the affirmative. Indeed, St. Thomas himself was conscious that he had left behind the views of Plato and Aristotle and posited something deeper which had been discerned only by a few thinkers. In regard to the question of the origin of matter St. Thomas writes that Plato and Aristotle did not have the right view of this problem because they only considered beings as "this being" or as "such a being", but that some thinkers were able to raise themselves to a consideration of being as being and of the cause of things, not merely to the extent that they are these things or of *such a kind*, but to the extent that they are being[56]. St. Thomas is referring probably to some Arab philosophers and Christian authors. He himself joins their company, but he develops the doctrine of the dependence of creatures on God at the level of being in a new manner. The doctrine of being is transformed into the study of the cause of being.

The conclusion that there is a necessary connection between Aquinas' doctrine of the real distinction between being and essence, on the one hand, and his philosophical theology, on the other hand, can also be reached by examining the proofs he gives for the real distinction mentioned above: the second proof sets out from the fact that things cannot have their being from themselves, but that there is only one Being which necessarily exists by itself. This train of thought constitutes the basis for the *Via tertia* (third proof of God's existence). The third argument given above sets out from the multiplicity of things and their limitation: something which is being by itself, can only be one and unlimited. This consideration is the basic element in the *Via quarta*, the

[55] *Quodl.* II,q.2,a.2: "Esse dicitur actus entis inquantum est ens, idest quo denominatur ens actu in rerum natura. Et sic esse non attribuitur nisi rebus ipsis quae in decem generibus continentur".
[56] I 44, 2.

fourth proof of God's existence, which sets out from the gradation which we encounter in the various perfections.

Moreover, the doctrine of the real distinction is intimately connected with that of the participation of all things in God's being. St. Thomas argues that "whatever exists in something so that it lies outside its essence, must be caused"[57] and that "all other things outside God are not their being but participate in being"[58]. "The being (*esse*) which is in created things cannot be understood except as coming from divine being"[59]. "Being is the first effect which is presupposed by all other effects (scil. of God's causality) and which itself does not presuppose any other effect"[60].

Being created necessarily implies the composition of being (*esse*) and essence which, in fact, is the deepest nature of things. Metaphysics considers the ultimate causes of things and so the insight that all things have their being from God will be the ultimate and deepest knowledge which the metaphysician can reach with regard to the world. As has often been pointed out, the self-revelation of God to Moses as the One who Is, an expression which under the influence of the Septuagint translation of the Bible was understood ontologically, facilitated the formulation of the doctrine of God as Self-subsistent Being itself and of the real distinction between being and essence in creatures. But despite the guiding role of revelation St. Thomas' doctrine of being belongs to the level of natural reason.

The later history of the doctrine of the real distinction

The study of the later history of the doctrine of the real distinction between being and essence is of importance in order to grasp better the extent of Aquinas' achievement. Shortly after the death of St. Thomas Siger of Brabant in his *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam Aristotelis* calls Thomas one of those who consider being as added to essence. Siger himself keeps to Averroes' position and attempts to solve the problems with regard to the Christian faith which arise from his position by arguing that being is attributable in a pure and unlimited manner only to God; creatures possess it to a lesser extent; things, he claims, are through themselves in the order of formal causality, but they are from another

[57] I 3, 4: "Quidquid est in aliquo quod est praeter essentiam eius oportet esse causatum".
[58] I 44, 1: "Omnia alia a Deo non sunt suum esse sed participant esse".
[59] *De potentia*, q.3, a.5 ad 1.
[60] *De potentia*, q.3, a.4. Cf. *Comp. Theol.* I, c.68.

(God) in the order of efficient causality. Moreover Siger criticizes St. Thomas for saying that being (*esse*) is constituted by essence. However, what Aquinas really writes is that "esse *quasi* constituitur per principia essentiae". Siger also asserts that for St. Thomas being is "a fourth something" added to essence (besides matter, form and accidents)[61]. The answer to this objection is obvious: being does not belong to the order of things (*res; natura*), but exists on a deeper level; it is the source of the being real of existing things. It is not something added to essence but realizes essence which in its turn "exercises" existence as its most profound act.

With few exceptions (among whom Hervaeus Natalis), the first disciples of St. Thomas stuck to the real distinction[62]. Giles of Rome defended it forcefully against the criticism of Henry of Ghent, although the terminology which he uses makes one suspect that he viewed being and essence as things. This was manifestly a consequence of the continued influence of the thought of Avicenna: being is seen more as an accident and is thought of as a thing. The same conception is found in Thomas of Sutton[63]. In the fourteenth century Giles' account of Aquinas' doctrine was considered a correct representation of the views of his master. An author of this period whose identity is unknown to us, contests this by arguing that being and essence are not two realities[64]. Around 1326 the Parisian master Bernard Lombardi wrote: "One may speak about being in two ways: the first is that of the holy teacher Thomas, who holds that in all things apart from God being differs from essence; the second is the unanimous view of all other Parisian masters, who hold the contrary"[65].

Scotus' treatment of the problem is entirely determined by what is commonly called his essentialist viewpoint: there is never essence without *esse*, since being is an intrinsic mode which belongs to essence

[61] *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, Introd., 7 (edit. Graiff (1948), p.16. It is possible that in his last work, the *Quaestiones super librum de causis*, Siger is closer to the position of St. Thomas. See F. Van Steenberghen, *Maître Siger de Brabant. Philosophes Médiévaux*, t.XXI, Louvain-Paris 1977, 292.

[62] See M. Grabmann, "Doctrina S. Thomae de distinctione inter essentiam et esse ex documentis ineditis saeculi XIII illustrata" in *Acta hebd.thomisticae*, Roma 1924, 131-196; id., "Circa historiam distinctionis realis essentiae et existentiae", in *Acta Pontif. Acad. Romanae S. Thomae Aquinatis*. I (1934) 61-76.

[63] See Stefan Swiezawski, "Quelques déformations de la pensée de saint Thomas dans la tradition thomiste", in S. Kaminski, Marian Kurdzialek, Z.J. Zdybicka (edit.), *Theory of Being to Understand Reality*, Lublin 1980, 269-284, p.274. Cf. J.F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines*, Washington D.C. 1981, 59-66 (Godfrey rejected the real distinction as it was taught by Giles of Rome).

[64] Swiezawski, *o.c.*, p.276.

[65] See J. Koch, *Durandus de S.Porciano*. BGPMA XXVI, 1,330.

in all its shades. Essence precedes being. "It is simply untrue that being is something different from essence"[66]. Scotus' imposing writings did not fail to influence early Thomists. Thus the *Summa totius logicae*, which apparently came from the pen of John of Naples, uses the Scotist-sounding terminology of *esse actualis existentiae*[67], which was later adopted by Cajetan. It has been asserted that Cajetan explained some aspects of St. Thomas' doctrine incorrectly. We shall return to this question in the next chapter.

Suarez considers the real distinction a distinction between two things (*res; entitates*) and rejects it[68]. His point of departure is a concept of being which ascribes a minimum of content to being: for instance, the being of a man and that of a rock are the same; without further differentiation being embraces the various kinds of beings. Being is a genus which holds within it both the finite as well as the Infinite. Actual essence (*verum actuale ens*) already possesses all attributes which St. Thomas ascribes to the *esse* and has temporality as its core, by which it is distinct from God's essence. For Suarez the advantage of his theory is that one has now to attribute only the generation of things to extrinsic principles. His rejection of the real distinction means that being (*ens*) is predicated both of God and of creatures; metaphysics becomes the general doctrine of being (ontology) and deals with God as well as with creatures. St. Thomas, however, states that God does not come under the subject of the doctrine of being; in this way he safeguards God's transcendence. Suarez' doctrine furthermore implies that things exist due to their essence, i.e. that things exist due to an intrinsic principle of their own. Thus the door was opened for the view, which later became widespread, according to which the "hypothesis" of the existence of God in order to explain things is superfluous.

Suarez' essentialism had an immense influence and via the numerous Jesuit colleges and manuals continued to imprint its mark on European thought up to the time of Kant. It was partly responsible for some of the ideas of Descartes and Wolff and also influenced the Thomistic school. In the interpretation of the doctrine of St. Thomas given by later

[66] *Opus oxon.* IV, d.13, q.1, n.38. Cf. A.J. O'Brien, "Duns Scotus' Teaching on the Distinction between Essence and Existence", in *The New Scholasticism* 38(1964)61-77: Scotus accepted a modal distinction between essence and being, comparable to that between the divine essence and divine infinity: "Certum est de esse essentiae quod tantum differt ab essentia in modo concipiendi" (*Op.oxon.* III, d.6, q.1, n.2: XIV 306).

[67] See A. Pattin in *Tijdschrift voor Philososphie* 19(1957)492-502.

[68] *Disp.metaphys.* XXXI 6,1; 5,3. See H.P. Kainz, "The Suaresian Position on Being and the Real Distinction", *The Thomist* 34(1970)289-305.

Thomists one can indeed observe a tendency towards extrinsecism, i.e. the view which elevates the essence to a thing to which existence is added. We may say here with Seifert that those thinkers who misunderstood being had also an incorrect idea of the nature of the essence[69]. C. Fabro speaks of a *fléchissement formaliste* which led to changes in the way being was conceived; these changes influenced the terminology used: instead of *esse - essentia* the words *esse essentiae - esse existentiae* came to be used, and later the terms *essentia - existentia*. Fabro rejects the term existence because he believes that it expresses only the being real which is signified by the copula[70]; he reproaches some Thomists for replacing *the word esse* by existence. However, this criticism is excessive: what matters are not terms as such but the meaning we give to them.

It seems that Francis of Vitoria did not accept the real distinction[71]. Melchior Cano and Dominic Soto view being as a *modus rei* and appear in this to be influenced by Scotus[72]. Bañez complains that in his days many Thomists had a faulty grasp of St. Thomas' doctrine. Apparently his concern is not without foundation[73]. In Wolff's *Ontologia* the essentialist position dominates: "That which can exist is called being, and hence that with which existence is not in contradiction"[74]. "That which is possible is a being"[75]. "What we first think when using 'being' is essence; without it being cannot exist"[76].

Kant knew Wolff's metaphysics through Franz Albert Schultz, a professor in Königsberg. Kant argues that no analysis of essence can yield the concept of existence. It is true that Kant accepted existing things (*das Ding an sich*), but he draws, as it were, a curtain in front of them and neutralizes them (to use Gilson's expression) to turn to the study of the concepts in the human mind. German idealism could be called a form of extreme essentialism. In Hegel's system the essence

[69] "Essence and existence", in *Aletheia* I 2 (1977) 375-459, p.390.

[70] See his "Il nuovo problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", in *Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica* 1974, 475-510, p.487; 507.

[71] "Ego credo quod nec S. Thomas tenet, ut ego puto, quod esse existentiae realiter distinguitur ab essentia". See Leonard Kennedy, "La doctrina de la existencia en la Universidad de Salamanca durante el siglo XVI" in *Archivio Teológico Granadino* (Granada) 35 (1972) 5-71.

[72] See C. Vansteenkiste in *Rassegna di Letteratura tomistica* VII (1975), p.396.

[73] E. Gilson quotes the following text: "Et hoc est quod saepissime D. Thomas clamat et Thomistae nolunt audire, quod esse est actualitas omnis formae vel naturae" (*In I^am*, q.3, a.4). See Gilson's "Remarques sur l'expérience en métaphysique", in *Actes du IXe congrès international de philosophie*, Amsterdam-Louvain 1953, IV 5-10.

[74] *O.c.*, paragr.134.

[75] Paragr.135.

[76] Paragr.309.

even produces its own existence; the idea raises itself to being. Kierkegaard reacted against this and placed the concrete human person in the center. In his *Postscriptum* he writes on existence: "The situation with existence is as with movement. It is very difficult to have to deal with it. When I form a concept of it, I make it cease to exist. In this way one might think that it is correct to say that there is something of which one cannot have a concept, namely existence. But then there remains the difficulty that due to the fact that he who thinks exists, existence is real at the same time as thought". Thus Kierkegaard emphasizes the unique, conceptually inexpressible character of individual being.

Existentialism wanted to give back to being the place which is due to it. "Existentialism is a philosophy of being without essence... The experience on which it rests may be described as a pure experience of existence, felt by a sensitivity which is, as it were, cut off from the intellect for a few moments... Existentialism forms, as it were, an ecstasy downwards"[77]. Existentialist thinkers do, indeed, seek contact with that which is most valuable in the cosmos. But because they do not accept the essence of man and of things for what it is or because they wish to subordinate it to man's subjectivity, their experience of being becomes a vertiginous contact with being which has lost its meaning. If one refuses to understand the (limited) being of man and of things as a participation in God's being, existence no longer has any basis; it becomes "too much" and superfluous, arising as it does from its own nothingness.

It is understandable that Heidegger, in the face of this kind of contingency and inexplicability, feels an existential anxiety arising in him, and that Sartre calls the basic experience of man a kind of loathing in the face of that senseless, dark mass of being, which is "too much". Heidegger's theory of being deserves closer attention. As we have argued in the Introduction, the distinction between beings (i.e. the physical things appearing to us) and Being is of fundamental significance for Heidegger. He sees the history of metaphysics as a regrettable concentration of attention on beings as beings, whereby Being itself is forgotten. In reality, however, Being is the soil on which beings grow. Being is presence (*Anwesenheit*)[78]; it shows itself and unfolds itself, but can never be known thematically. It is for us the horizon, the possibility of our encounter with other beings. Since being is "being present" it is

[77] E. Gilson, *L'être et l'essence, p.298.*

[78] *Einleitung zu* "Was ist Metaphysik?", in *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt a.M. 1967, p.196.

characterised by historicity. However, this being present has a pulsating character to the extent that Being appears to us, but also withdraws itself again to remain at a certain distance[79]. Being conceals itself and is (*west*) in its absence, so that nothingness accompanies Being. Human being (*Dasein*) is the correlative, against which and by means of which Being becomes knowable. —From this it is clear to what extent the phenomenological approach dominates Heidegger's philosophy: Being is reduced to its appearance[80]. Originally Heidegger was of the opinion that Being can be without beings[81]. But some years later he abandoned this position and asserted that Being is never without a being (*das Sein west nie ohne das Seiende*)[82]. This means that according to Heidegger Being is not independent of beings (nor of the *Dasein*). However paradoxical this may sound in view of his assertion that other philosophers neglected Being, he himself failed to see the full development and the highest instance of being in Self-subsistent Being itself[83].

The theologian Karl Rahner was deeply influenced by Heidegger and interprets being as presence, even when he emphasizes at the same time the reality and fullness of being. He sees being as being on its own and identifies it with knowing[84].

The problem of being and essence may rightly be considered as a dividing line running through the history of philosophy. It is manifestly extremely difficult to have a correct understanding of both components of common being and to express them correctly in language. Being (*esse*) cannot be grasped entirely in a concept, since our experience of being takes place in a judgement which is contact with and an affirmation of this most irreducible individual being of things. Still less can being be entirely reduced to that which is, as it has a power of actuality and realization which surpasses the thing which it realizes. It precedes essence by priority of nature in the order of quasi-efficient causality. It has a sense which we cannot grasp entirely by means of our concepts. Being in its deepest core is being real before it is any particular reality

[79] See *Sein und Zeit*, p.30; *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, pp.38ff.

[80] Even according to Husserl being is being-for-a-subject. The human subject co-constitutes being and its meaning.

[81] *Nachwort zu "Was ist Metaphysik?"*, 1943.

[82] *Nachwort zu "Was ist Metaphysik?"*, edition of 1949.

[83] Cf. C. Fabro, "Dall'essere di Aristotele all'*Esse* di Tommaso", in *Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson*, Toronto/Paris 1959, 227-247. —Some students of Heidegger have identified his 'Being' with God, but he himself vehemently refuses this interpretation. See our *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas in a Historical Perspective*, Leiden 1990, ch.I.

[84] See his *Geist in Welt*.

(e.g. being man). Thus St. Thomas writes that being itself is more excellent than being man[85]. In its deepest reality being is simplicity and perfection, which point beyond the multiplicity and limitation of things to the unity and perfection of God[86]. Being in itself is above becoming and time[87]: man's being surpasses his historicity.

[85] III 16, 9 ad 2; *In V Metaph.*, lectio 9, n.896.

[86] *De potentia*, q.1, a.1: "Esse significat aliquid completum et simplex"; q.5, a.1 ad 2: "Ipsum esse secundum se est in instanti".

[87] I 11, 1: "Esse cuiuslibet rei consistit in indivisione".

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

BEING (ESSE)

The conclusion we have reached in the previous chapter, viz. that created things consist of being and essence as two really distinct components, requires further examination. Throughout the centuries Thomists have undoubtedly paid attention to St. Thomas' statements on the significance of being (*actus essendi; esse*). But as was the case in the interpretation and representation of the real distinction, here too we find varying emphases and at times less exact interpretations of the meaning of being. C. Fabro even speaks of a darkening of the concept of being in the Thomist School[1]. Fabro is of the opinion that too much attention has been paid to one meaning of being, viz. that of reality or actual existence, but that the meaning of perfection was disregarded which for St. Thomas is primary because being is the most formal and first act[2]. It is said of Cajetan that he is guilty of such an incorrect representation[3].

Upon closer examination, however, this criticism does not appear to be entirely justified[4]. Cajetan saw the significance of the important text in the *Summa theologiae*, in which St. Thomas states that of all things being is most perfect[5]. Cajetan explains that, unlike as in Scotus' doctrine, for St. Thomas being is not a potential principle which is determined by essences[6]. John of St. Thomas, in his commentary on this text, also points out that Aquinas does not see being as opposed to essence, but as the final (thus most perfect) act in the order of reality[7]. It is important, however, to observe that these two major commentators

[1] "L'obscurcissement de l'être dans l'école thomiste", in *Revue thomiste* 58(1958) 443-472.

[2] See L. De Raeymaeker, *Philosophie de l'être. Essai de synthèse métaphysique*, Louvain 1947, p.155.

[3] This was noted by Bañez in his Commentary of the *Summa theologiae*, I (edit.L.Urbana, Madrid-Valencia 1934, I 142;145). See E. Gilson, "Cajetan et l'humanisme théologique", in *AHLDMA* 22(1956) 113-136.

[4] Cf. John P. Reilly, "Cajetan: Essentialist or Existentialist?", in *The New Scholasticism* 41(1967) 191-222.

[5] I 4, 1 ad 3: "Esse est perfectissimum omnium; actualitas omnium rerum et etiam ipsarum formarum".

[6] *In I^am*, 4, 1 V.

[7] *Cursus theologicus (In I^am*, disp.5, a.1. Th.Tynn forcefully defends John of St. Thomas against Fabro's criticism. See his "L'essere nel pensiero di Giovanni di San Tommaso", in A. Lobato (edit.), *Giovanni di San Tommaso, O.P.: Nel IV. Centenario della sua nascita (1589). Il suo pensiero filosofico, teologico, mistico*, Roma 1989, 21-55.—Ferrariensis, on the other hand, has a rather surprizing view of being. He seems to place it on the same level as the accidents instead of considering it a substantial predicate Cf. *In S.C.G.* I 21,V

sometimes use a different terminology to that of St. Thomas. Closer to our own times, Maritain writes in one of his first books that being is a perfection and that being and perfection go together[8].

From the thirties onward authors as Maritain and Gilson have brought out better the central position of being in St. Thomas' philosophy. After World War II a powerful movement in Thomism developed against the "essentialist danger". The rise of existentialism undoubtedly contributed to this tendency towards a more existentialist Thomism. Contact with Heidegger's thought strongly influenced a thinker like Cornelio Fabro. It should, however, be mentioned that Maritain excludes any influence of existentialism on himself[9]. Gilson also declares that in 1940, while he was writing his book *God and Philosophy*, he came to see the full meaning of being. At that time he had not read a line of Kierkegaard, Heidegger or Jaspers, and Sartre was still unknown to him[10].

The new element in Maritain's and Gilson's interpretation of St. Thomas' metaphysics is that being obtains a position of central importance and that metaphysics becomes the science of being. Joseph de Finance, Josef Pieper and others expressed themselves in favour of an existentialist interpretation of St. Thomas' thought, which assigns a much reduced place to essence and views being as signifying not merely the fact of existence but also a fullness of perfection. This interpretation gained ground in the United States[11] and Canada[12].

The Italian Thomist Cornelio Fabro pointed out with great emphasis that "for St. Thomas being is the first and original metaphysical value[13] and that his concept of being "remains completely original in regard to all other views which arose in Western thought and ... for this reason is not subject to Heidegger's criticism"[14]. Fabro recalls again and again that

("Suppositum vero immateriale duo tantum includit, scilicet essentiam et aliqua praeter essentiam quae nihil faciunt ad individuationem naturae, ut esse et alia quaedam accidentia ad suppositum pertinentia"). St. Thomas himself is very careful in the passage commented on by Ferrariensis (*SCG* I 21): "Sola autem accidentia rei sunt quae in definitione non cadunt".

[8] *Antimoderne*, pp.150f.

[9] *Court traité de l'existant et de l'existence*, p.11: "Nous n'avons pas attendu ces systèmes (existentialistes) pour dénoncer l'erreur qui consiste à concevoir la philosophie de l'être comme une philosophie des essences".

[10] See L.-B. Geiger, "Bulletin de Métaphysique", in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 34(1950) 315ff., p.321.

[11] Cf. the title of Ch.A. Hart's study *Thomistic Metaphysics. An Enquiry into the Act of Existing*, Engle Wood Cliffs 1959.

[12] See G.B. Phelan in A.G. Kim (edit.), *G.B. Phelan. Selected Papers*, Toronto 1967, p.67.

[13] "Actualité et originalité de l'*esse* thomiste", in *Revue thomiste* 56(1956) 240-270; 480-507, p.261.

[14] *O.c.*, 480.

according to St. Thomas being is act, namely the first and ultimate act, the most perfect and most formal but also the most intimate and most profound act"[15]. At the same time Fabro condemns in the sharpest terms the use of 'existence' to denote being.

L. De Raeymaeker of Louvain made this view his own at an early date and published a valuable study on the various meanings of the word being in Aquinas[16]. He also gave some thought to a possible development of St. Thomas's concept of being: Aquinas, he holds, originally understood being as actuality and reality[17]; later, however, when writing his commentary on Boethius' *De Hebdomadibus*, Thomas connected this Aristotelian view of being with Plato's doctrine of participation and came to see being as the most all-embracing of perfections[18]. De Raeymaeker refers to the text "being participates in nothing, but everything participates in being"[19].

However, one must be very cautius when speaking of a significant development in St. Thomas' thought. In many cases there has been only a change in a terminology which was not yet fixed. For example, the term *esse* can at times even have the meaning of the essence which makes a being be this thing[20].

How do we know being? The theories of Maritain, Gilson and Fabro

In the study of being the first question to be answered is that of how we know being[21]. Well-known Thomists such as Maritain, Gilson and Fabro have given different answers. In the opinion of Maritain humanity in its present situation no longer has any intuition of being; the theologian St. Thomas was the first to point out the correct path here[22]. To obtain the

[15] "La problematica dell'esse tomistico", in *Aquinas* 2(1959) 194-225.

[16] "De zin van het woord *esse* bij den H. Thomas van Aquino", in *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie* 8(1946) 407-434.

[17] He refers to the *De ente et essentia*, c.6 where Thomas writes concerning God: "Similiter etiam, quamvis sit esse tantum, non deficiant ei reliquae perfectiones".

[18] "L'être selon Avicenne et selon saint Thomas d'Aquin", in *Avicenna Commemoration Volume*, Calcutta 1954, 119-131, p.128.

[19] See the *Quaestio disp. de anima*, a.6 ad 2.

[20] Cf. A Keller, *Sein oder Existenz. Die Auslegung des Seins bei Thomas van Aquin in der heutigen Scholastik*, München 1968, p.195ff.; Helen James John S.N.D., "The Emergency of the Act of Existing in Recent Thomism", in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2(1962) 595-620; Scott Y. Watson, *Esse in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (diss.Gregorianum), Rome 1972.

[21] Cf. our essay "La connaissance de l'être et l'entrée en métaphysique", *Revue thomiste* 80(1980) 24-45.

[22] Our summary is based on "Réflexions sur la nature blessée et sur l'intuition de l'être", *Revue thomiste* 68(1968) 5-40.

correct concept of being we must set out from judgements which confirm existence, such as "I am", "things are". These judgements differ from sentences in which a predicate is joined to a subject by means of the copula. The concept "existence" follows on such an existential judgement, which accordingly has a unique position [23]. In this judgement one "sees" existence as it is outside our mind. "Only afterwards does a return of the first operation of the intellect to what was seen in this way (but not by that first operation) yield a concept". Apart from this concept of existence there is another one which does not result from a judgement, but from abstraction (as it takes place in the first operation of the intellect), in the same way as all concepts which are drawn from the images of the imagination through this operation[24]. This concept precedes the intuition of being. Existence is known in it as a thing; its meaning is that of presence in my world. Finally being may also be grasped in an intuition. But Maritain reserves this special intuition of being to a few privileged metaphysicians. He describes it as a sudden transition to a higher level, namely that of the third degree of abstraction. Once we have attained this intuition of being, being without limits opens up to us and we discover the analogy as well as the transcendental attributes of being[25]. Aristotle, he holds, remained at the level of the abstract concept of being (being as a thing).

According to Gilson, St. Thomas' doctrine of the real distinction between being and essence presupposes the insight that God is the *Ipsum Esse per se subsistens* (Self-subsistent Being itself), an insight which is expressed in the text of *Exodus* 3, 13-14[26]. Gilson notes that existence can mean both a state as well as an act. In the first meaning the term refers to the state of actual existence in which a thing is placed by an efficient cause or by the creating Cause. This is the meaning given to the term by almost all theologians outside Thomism. Only Aquinas has understood that being is act, scil. fullness of perfection. With regard to the way in which we know being Gilson rejects the theory of an intuition proposed by Maritain: "The most all-embracing of concepts of whatness is that of a being (*ens*) or that which possesses being; but from the being of a thing one can only abstract the concept of being in general (*esse commune*), the content of which exists only in thought, in the manner of an *ens rationis* and not as the act of the being which is in reality we are now

[23] *O.c.*, pp.17ff.

[24] *O.c.*, pp.18ff.

[25] *O.c.*, p.23ff.

[26] *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, Garden City N.Y., 1960, pp.124ff.

dealing with... It is impossible to have an intuitive grasp of the being of a thing, as *this* being (*esse*) is accessible to us only in the sensible perception of the substance which is realised through it. We see actual being only in the effect in which it expresses itself, namely in the being (*ens*) which is perceived by the senses and known by the intellect"[27]. According to Gilson the so-called intuition of being is nothing but "the intuition of an abstraction, the object of which does not exist except as an *ens rationis* in our mind. Gilson quotes in favour of his thesis the text of St. Thomas that "only that can be reached by our intellect which has an essence which participates in being", but he does not say how we are to understand the texts in which Aquinas confirms that the judgement refers to being (*fertur in esse*) and that in his reflective knowledge of himself man perceives that he knows and exists ("percipit se sentire et esse").

C. Fabro emphasizes the importance of the real distinction for our knowledge of being[28]. In his view St. Thomas could only develop his doctrine of being (*esse*) as the act of a being (*ens*) in the perspective of creation[29]. He returns repeatedly to his central assertion that most Thomists have remained at the level of reducing being to the mere concept of existence acquired in a judgement. In Fabro's view the judgement reaches only the condition of existence, i.e. the realized possibility. Being as *actus essendi* is not seen directly by the intellect in an intuition (e.g. in the judgement regarding existence), but is reached in a process of thinking which, with the aid of the metaphysics of participation, penetrates deeper into that which is. The judgement and the copula "is" refer to the reality of a being (*ens*), but according to Fabro they do not reach the full riches of the content of being (*esse*)[30]. Thus Fabro does accept a concept of being which signifies both existence and the cause of all perfection but he attributes to the judgement only a highly limited role in the formation of this concept[31].

From the above it is clear that both Maritain and Gilson as well as Fabro agree on the riches of the content of being (which means not

[27] E. Gilson, "Propos sur l'être et sa notion", in *Studi tomistici III: San Tommaso e il pensiero moderno. Saggi*, Roma 1974, 7-17, p.10f.

[28] Cf. his *Participation et causalité selon saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Paris-Louvain 1961, 35.

[29] "Actualité et originalité de l'*esse* thomiste", *l.c.*, p.481.

[30] "The Transcendentality of *ens - esse* and the Ground of Metaphysics", in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 1966, 389-427, 426.

[31] In addition to the texts mentioned in previous notes see also Fabro's "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", in *Revue thomiste* 66(1966)214-237 and M.-D. Philippe, *Une philosophie de l'être est-elle encore possible? V. Le problème de l'être chez certains thomistes contemporains*, Paris 1975, pp.37ff.

merely being real but also fullness of perfection); but their explanations of the manner in which we know being show significant differences. Manifestly we are dealing here with an extremely difficult question which must be studied with great caution and care.

An analysis of St. Thomas' texts on this question

Aquinas frequently speaks of a twofold meaning of the term *esse*, namely a) the reality, the real being of the things which exist according to the predicaments[32]; b) the composition of the predicate and the subject which occurs in the second operation of the intellect (the judgement). — Sometimes the meaning referred to under a) is subdivided into a main meaning, namely that of the act of being which results from the principles of the thing[33], and a second meaning, namely that of the essence according to which the thing exists. —The meaning referred to under b) is based on a) : "The composition is based on the being of the thing, which is the act of the essence"[34]. Thus St. Thomas holds that being results from the principles of the thing, but he mentions expressly that it is not added as an accident to the essence[35].

Furthermore he states most emphatically that being (*ens*) is that which is known first[36]. The human intellect is ordained towards reality and proceeds from the knowledge of what is most general to that of the more particular. In the concept of being (*ens*) it is not *that* which is, but the *is* which is most important and most fundamental[37]. That which is participates in the act of being just as potency participates in act[38]. Consequently for St. Thomas the distinction made by Suarez between *ens ut nomen* and *ens ut participium* is not admissible. What is first known by the intellect is not being as a noun, in abstraction from existence, but real being. Contrary to what Suarez says, not the *ens ut nomen* is the subject of metaphysics, but being in its reality!

At the start of our intellectual life, we first know the different beings

[32] *In I Sent.*, d.19, q.5, a.1 ad 1. Cf. *In III Sent.*, d.6, q.2, a.2; *S.Th.* I 3, 4 ad 2.

[33] *In III Sent.*, d.6, q.2, a.2: "Actus entis resultans ex principiis rei".

[34] *In I Sent.*, d.33, q.1, a.1 ad 1: "Compositio fundatur in esse rei quod est actus essentiae". Cf. *ibid., d.19, q.5, a.1.*

[35] *In IV Metaph.*, l.2, n.558.

[36] *De potentia*, q.9, a.7 ad 15: "Primum quod in intellectum cadit est ens"; *De veritate*, q.1, a.1: "Illud quod primo intellectus concipit et in quod conceptiones omnes resolvit est ens". Cf. *De ente et essentia*, proemium; *In X Metaph.*, l.4, n.1998; *In X Metaph.*, l.6, n.605: "Et quia hoc principium...dependet ex intellectu entis".

[37] *De veritate*, q.1, a.1 ad 3: "...nomen autem entis ab actu essendi sumitur, non ab eo cui convenit actus essendi". See *In I Sent.*, d.25, q.1, a.4: "Nomen entis sumitur ab esse rei".

[38] Cf. *In Boetii De hebdomadibus*, l.2.

in an abstract and general concept; their core and centre is being real, i.e. their beingness or *ratio essendi*. This general concept is accompanied by the presence in our external and internal senses of one or more concrete and individual physical realities (this presence is brought about by means of the cognitive species)[39]. The senses are in contact with the physical reality of the individual things we know. As a matter of fact the sense faculties and the intellect are intimately connected, since both are rooted in our spiritual soul: the same person who perceives through the senses, also thinks[40]. Formally speaking the intellect as such does not know the individual act of the being of things, since its concept of being (*ens*) is abstract and general; but because of its collaboration with sense knowledge, which is embraced as it were and taken up by the immaterial mind, the intellect does participate in the immediate intuition of the existing things by the senses. To this must be added that our knowledge of being (*ens*) is always accompanied by an experience of our own reality. For this reason the concept of being is never entirely separated from the perception of concrete existence[41].

As our intellectual life develops, our knowledge of being (*ens*) becomes knowledge of substantial being and of the accidents and also knowledge of act and potency. But how, then, does the concept of being (*esse*) arise? From language to language the verb 'to be' does not always have the same function. Moreover, in certain propositions apparently no verb is used. However, we are concerned not so much with the linguistic functions of the verb 'to be' as with the content of thought signified by it. The proper object of the human intellect which carries out its activity in the incarnate state of man, is the whatness of material things. The perfection of our knowledge consists in a return, from this general concept, to the physical, individual reality of these things[42]. This "return" occurs in two ways: a) by means of the connection between intellectual and sense-knowledge; b) by the application of a concept (*ratio intellecta*) to the concrete reality of something. This "application" takes place in the second operation of the intellect (to which we will refer as 'judgement'). The "return" under b) presupposes the connection and

[39] I 84, 7: "Impossibile est intellectum nostrum secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori coniungitur, aliquid intelligere in actu nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata".

[40] *De veritate*, q.2, a.6: "...intellectus noster...habet quandam cognitionem de singulari secundum continuationem quandam ad imaginationem".

[41] *De veritate*, q.10, a.8: "...in hoc enim aliquis percipit se animam habere et vivere et esse quod percipit se sentire et intelligere et alia huiusmodi vitae opera exercere. Nullus autem percipit se intelligere nisi ex hoc quod aliquid intelligit".

[42] See I 86, 7.

the contact expressed under a). Without the latter no statement about reality would be possible[43].

Aquinas argues that there is not only a first concept to which all succeeding concepts can be reduced, but also a first judgement from which all succeeding statements can be derived. As it has been shown in Chapter Ten, the first judgement is "this is not that" (*quod hoc non est illud*)[44]. This judgement and the concept or insight given with it that "it is really this way" depend on the being (*ens*) we perceive. It is proper to one being that it is not another being distinct from it. For this reason Aquinas says that *ens* is the source of being (*esse*)[45], although from the standpoint of formal and efficient causality a being depends on its *esse*[46].

In accordance with this doctrine of Aquinas and in contrast to Maritain's procedure we take as the point of departure of our analysis not a judgement such as "Paul exists" but the first judgement (being is not not-being) on which all later judgements depend[47]. St. Thomas expressly states that judgements concern the being of things, which in composite beings results from the synthesis of their principles or which in simple substances is the act of their incomposite essence[48]. It follows that in this first judgement and also in our other statements about reality there occurs a return to the *actus essendi* of the thing or of the structure of being we are speaking about. Incidentally we recall that there are judgements which do not concern the intimate being of something, such as e.g. our statements about God, whose being as it really is remains concealed from us.

What we have said can be clarified further: there are statements such as "Socrates is wise" and others such as "Socrates exists". Does this distinction mean that a predicate is not always necessary? What is the

[43] *In II Sent.*,, d.3, q.3, a.3 ad 1: "...et ideo eis (speciebus e rebus acceptis) singularia non cognoscuntur quae individuantur per materiam, nisi per reflexionem quandam intellectus ad imaginationem et sensum, dum scilicet intellectus speciem universalem quam a singularibus abstraxit, applicat formae singulari in imaginatione servatae". St. Thomas also uses the expression "applicare rationes ad res" (*In Boetii De Trinitate*, l.2, q.1, a.2 ad 4). See G.P. Klubertanz, "St. Thomas and the Knowledge of the Singular", in *The New Scholasticism* 26 (1952) 135-166.

[44] *De potentia*, q.9, a.7 ad 15; *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 6, n.605; *In X Metaph.*, lectio 4, n.1997: "Diviso autem quae praesupponitur ad rationem unius, secundum quod convertitur cum ente... est divisio quam causat contradictio, prout hoc ens et illud dicuntur divisa, ex eo quod hoc non est illud".

[45] *In I Peri herm.*, l.5, n.70: "Id quod est fons et origo ipsius esse, scilicet ipsum ens".

[46] *SCG* I, c.25: "Nomen autem rei a quidditate imponitur, sicut nomen entis ab esse".

[47] Cf. *In IV Metaph.*, lectio 6, n.605.

[48] *In Boetii De Trinitate*, lectio 2,q.1, a.3: "Secunda operatio respicit ipsum esse rei, quod quidem resultat ex aggregatione principiorum rei in compositis vel ipsam simplicem naturam rei comitatur, ut in substantiis simplicibus".

meaning of "existence" in the second statement? Is there a fundamental difference between the being of things, on the one hand, and being (existence) which is expressed by the existential judgement, on the other? The answer to the first question is that for St. Thomas the verb (the copula) and the predicate together constitute one single predicate. A judgement consists of only two essential elements. Hence in a judgement such as "Socrates exists" the verb alone is the predicate[49].

When Gilson writes that the judgements in which the verb itself is joined to the subject (the judgements called *de secundo adiacente*) constitute a class on their own and that they are not reducible to the statements in which subject and predicate are joined together by a copula (judgements *de tertio adiacente*), he cannot appeal to St. Thomas nor for that matter to modern linguistics[50]. With regard to the question whether there is a difference between the existence (which is expressed by the judgement) and the 'being real' of things,—a question to which Fabro replies affirmatively—, our answer must be that the basic meaning of the verb 'to be' is that of the reality of every form, whether this is a substantial or an accidential essence, and that in the second place (*ex consequenti*) the verb expresses the composition of the subject and the predicate[51]. Precisely because being expresses reality (*actualitas*) it

[49] *In II Peri herm.*, l.2, n.212: "...hoc verbum *est* quandoque in enunciatione praedicatur secundum se, cum dicitur: Socrates est, —per quod nihil aliud intendimus significare quam quod Socrates est in rerum natura. Quandoque vero non praedicatur per se quasi principale praedicatum, sed quasi coniunctum principali praedicato ad connectendum ipsum subiecto, sicut cum dicitur Socrates est albus, non est intentio loquentis ut asserat Socratem esse in rerum natura sed ut attribuat ei albedinem mediante hoc verbo *est*; et ideo in talibus *est* praedicatur ut adiacens principali pradicato...simul cum nomine praedicato facit unum praedicatum, ut sic enunciatio dividatur in duas partes et non in tres".

[50] See E. Gilson, *L'être et l'essence*, Paris 1948, p.283. See L.-M. Régis' critical observations "Gilson's *Being and Some Philosophers*", in *The Modern Schoolman* 28(1950-1951) 11-125.

[51] *In I Peri herm.*, l.5,n.73: "...hoc verbum *est* consignificat compositionem, quia non eam principaliter significat, sed ex consequenti; significat enim principaliter illud quod cadit in intellectu per modum actualitatis absolute; nam *est* simpliciter dictum significat in actu esse, et ideo significat per modum verbi. Quia vero actualitas quam principaliter significat hoc verbum *est*, est communiter actualitas omnis formae vel actus substantialis vel accidentalis, inde est quod cum volumus significare quamcumque formam vel actum actualiter inesse alicui subiecto, significamus illud per hoc verbum *est*, vel simpliciter vel secundum quid; simpliciter quidem secundum praesens tempus; secundum quid autem secundum alia tempora. Et ideo ex consequenti hoc verbum *est* significat compositionem". See also *Quodl.* IX, q.2, a.2. For a commentary on these texts see R. McInerny, "Some Notes on Being and Predication", in *The Thomist* 22(1959)315-335 and A. Zimmermann, "Ipsum enim [est] nihil est" (Aristoteles, *Peri hermeneias* I, c.3): Thomas von Aquin über die Bedeutung der Kopula", in aa.vv., *Der Begriff der Repraesentatio im Mittelalter. Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, Bd. 8, Berlin-New-York 1971, pp.282-295. Prof. Zimmermann shows how Aquinas clarifies the text of the *Peri herm.*: the term *actualitas*, which signifies the proper meaning of the verb to be, is always connected to one or another thing of which it expresses the reality. Hence

means all reality, thus also accidental composition which is expressed in many of our judgements. There is no gap or separation between the meaning of real existence and that of fullness of being, as Fabro and others would have it. Precisely because being signifies realization and being real, as the principle of realization it must bear in itself the perfection of what it realizes.

The numerous texts in which St. Thomas, like Aristotle had done before him, makes a distinction between being as the copula and being to the extent that it signifies the reality of the ten predicaments must clearly be read in the light of the passage from the commentary of the *Peri hermeneias* quoted above. This means that the verb 'to be' really has one basic meaning, in which that of the reality of a composition is implied (as this is expressed in statements in which the predicate is joined to the subject). Usually in our daily language this composition coincides with, i.e. follows logically on reality as it is given. But in some cases there is no "being real" to correspond without more to the composition of terms expressed in our judgement. This happens when we speak affirmatively of a privation, as in the sentence "Peter is blind", but also in our statements about God: the judgement that God exists is certainly true, but because we cannot make any statement about God's most intimate reality, which we do not know, "is" in "God is" means that our judgement is true but does not express God's being as such[52].

We have pointed out that the statements we make usually refer to concrete reality which is perceived by our senses[53]. In order to explain this "return" to concrete reality, the role of the estimative sense-faculty (*vis aestimativa*, which in man is called *cogitativa*), should be emphasized. This sense-faculty, under the direction of the intellect, knows individual reality. When our intellect is confronted with a concrete synthesis (this red flower), which is presented to it by the *cogitativa*, it confirms its reality and it can use the verb 'to be' in order to do so. Later the intellect, making use of the knowledge acquired previously, forms judgements about what is possible and about what has been, and finally about God. In these cases the verb 'to be' means in the first place the truth of the synthesis stated (or denied) in the judgement, and only in an indirect sense the ontological structure on which this statement is based.

the expression "ipsum est nihil est" means that it is nothing determinate. This also explains why Aquinas accepts Aristotle's suggestion that there is a certain composition in the *esse* ("hoc ipsum esse videtur compositio quaedam").

[52] *De potentia*, q.7, a.2 ad 1; *De ente et essentia*, c.1.

[53] *De veritate*, q.12, a.3 ad 2: "Sed quia primum principium nostrae cognitionis est sensus, oportet ad sensum quodammodo resolvere omnia de quibus iudicamus".

One can go even further and make a distinction in the fundamental meaning of 'to be', which is reality ("significat per modum actualitatis absolute"), between being real without more in the sense of a "there is" and a more metaphysical meaning. St. Thomas speaks in the first case of *aliquid ponere in re*[54] or *esse in rerum natura*. The metaphysical meaning comes later and requires, as we shall see, a particular mode of thought of the intellect.

The concept 'to be' is formed on the basis of the concept of being (*ens*). Its first meaning is that of reality (*actualitas*), being real, which implies the entire riches of being. The meaning "being present" connotes a certain limitation of this basic meaning. The distinction made by Gilson and Fabro between the state of being (existence), on the one hand, and being as fullness of perfection, on the other hand[55], cannot in any case mean a separation, since both meanings usually coincide; even so, as we shall see later, the distinction does have a meaning. The concept 'to be' is a determination and limitation of the concept of being (*ens*) and is formed, from the insight reached in the first judgement, by means of abstraction: the intellect expresses that which is common to the various ways of being real.

At first this concept is univocal, as it refers to the reality of substances,—at a later stage it is extended to accidental determinations and thus it becomes analogous. The being (*esse*) of things, however, differs in each instance: "The being of a man and of a horse is not the same, and likewise that of this human being or that"[56]. Being is first known as something abstract[57]. In this process of abstraction the most individual and unique aspect of this reality remains beyond the reach of the intellect, which forms the (general) concept of being, although this individual dimension of being is touched upon, as it were, in the judgement. Thus in this (limited) sense Gilson's thesis that a concept of being is not possible, is true. But the concept of being does express what is central and essential in being. In this process of abstraction the agent intellect (*intellectus agens*)[58] is at work, as it also is in the judgement[59].

[54] Cf. *De ente et essentia*, c.1: "...primo modo non potest dici ens nisi quod aliquid in re ponit".

[55] See E. Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, p.142; C. Fabro, "Actualité et originalité de l'*esse* thomiste", *Participation et causalité*, pp.481.

[56] I 3, 5.

[57] See *In Boetii De Trinitate*, l.2. Cf. I, 12, 4 ad 3.

[58] The immaterial, cognitive light which produces the intelligible species from the representations of sensitive knowledge to impress them on the intellect.

[59] *De spirit.creaturis*, a.10 ad 8; II-II 171, 2.

When we attempt to understand how a more perfect knowledge of being is reached, we encounter a new problem, namely how does metaphysics originate? For St. Thomas it is not self-evident that there is metaphysics. Maritain and Gilson rightly emphasize this point. Even more noteworthy is Aquinas' suggestion that Plato and Aristotle did not really develop a metaphysics of being[60].

As we have seen in the Introduction St. Thomas distinguishes a dual way of abstraction, scil. the *abstractio totius* and *the abstractio formalis*, but he also introduces the *separatio*, which is a negative judgement to the effect that not all beings are material. This separation allows us to form concepts which are free from all matter, even from the *materia intelligibilis*[61]. The immediate cause of the division of the theoretical sciences is not the adaptation of the intellect to the various layers of being, as Plato supposed these to exist in reality, but the intellect itself, which can penetrate deeper into one and the same reality[62] and reach the conclusion that there exists immaterial being (the human mind; God). We are dealing here with analyses which lie on the borderline between the philosophy of nature and metaphysics[63].

The discovery that not all beings are material provides us with a new concept of being. Up to the moment of this discovery being was for us the reality of physical things; but now we discern in material beings, which do remain the proper object of our intellect for as long as we live in the body, a deeper dimension of being (*esse*), namely that of being real as such. We now understand that in these material beings and their existence there is a depth of being which is more fundamental than their particular realization as this being, this body or this man[64]. St. Thomas does indeed distinguish between 'to be' in an absolute sense (*esse simpliciter*), i.e. a participation in being itself, and a participation in something else in order to be something ("ad hoc quod sit aliquid"). Apparently we should distinguish as it were "layers" in the reality of

[60] The main text is I 44, 2, but see also *In IV Metaph.*, l.1, n.529 (Aristotle supposes but obviously does not prove that there is metaphysics). In *In VI Metaph*, St. Thomas rejects implicitly Aristotle's tripartition of the theoretical sciences, for he argues that first philosophy also studies material things.

[61] Cf. I 85, 1 ad 1 and ad 2.—This intelligible matter is the connotation of matter as it remains present in the universal concepts of the essences of material things.

[62] *In Boetii De Trinitate*, q.5, a.3. See our *Faith and Science. An Introduction to St. Thomas' Expositio in Boethii de Trinitate*, Roma 1974, pp.96ff.

[63] *In II Phys.*, l.4, n.175.

[64] See *In Boetii De Hebdomadibus*, l.2, n.30: "Primo oportet ut intelligatur aliquid esse simpliciter et postea quod sit aliquid...Nam aliquid est simpliciter per hoc quod participat ipsum esse; sed quando iam est, scilicet per participationem ipsius esse, restat ut participet quocumque alio, ad hoc scilicet quod sit aliquid".

things;these layers or levels coincide and form one realitiy but nonetheless are an expression of the inner riches of being. In this way we conclude that being is the reality of all acts and hence the perfection of all perfections[65].

St. Thomas attributes a certain priority to the *actualitas* of being in regard to perfection (*et propter hoc*), with the result that according to our manner of thinking that which has been called the intensive meaning of being is apparently given with the fact that being is the reality of all things. 'To be' in an absolute sense (*esse simpliciter*) is more fundamental than each of its particular forms, such as being a body, an animal or man[66]. Being cannot be reduced to thinking or to being known, and metaphysics is not a meta-anthropology.

In this way we understand that being presupposes nothing, but that it is presupposed by all other effects of God's action[67]. Because the being of ourselves and of the things in the world is contingent, limited and multiple, we discover that things are not their being, but that there is a real distinction between the thing, on the one hand, and its act of being on the other. Setting out from this insight we can discover Self-subsistent Being itself, namely God.

If one considers this doctrine from a historical standpoint, it is obvious that Aquinas developed this metaphysical concept of being in the light of the Christian faith in creation, and in particular of the revelation of God's name as "I am, who am", a revelation which Thomas himself calls "this sublime truth"[68]. Granted the importance for Aquinas of this revelation even so one has to acknowledge that a purely philosophical development of the Thomist doctrine of being is theoretically possible. Gilson's assertion that the proofs of the real distinction between being and essence are dependent on a prior insight into the existence of God[69] is not correct. But it is certainly true that in the

[65] *De potentia*, q.7, a.2 ad 9: "...actualitas omnium actuum et *propter hoc* est perfectio omnium perfectionum". The same idea is expressed in such early texts as *In I Sent.*, d.19, q.2, a.2 ("esse est actus entis...sicut lucere est actus lucentis") and *In III Sent.*, d.6, q.2, a.2 ("esse est actus entis").

[66] III 16, 9 ad 2; *De veritate*, q.22, a.6 ad 1: "Et tamen non est verum quod intelligere sit nobilius quam esse". See B. Lakebrink, "Der thomistische Seinsbegriff und seine existentiale Umdeutung", in *Tommaso d'Aquino nel suo settimo centenario. Atti del Congresso internazionale*, vol.VI, 219-238. However, when one considers *vivere* and *intelligere* as including being (to which they add a mode of being) they are more perfect than mere being. See I 4, 2 ad 2; *De veritate*, q.20, a.2 ad 3 and Ferrariensis, *In I SCG*, c.28, I, 2.

[67] *De potentia, q.3, a.4;* SCG II, c.21; *Comp.theol.* I, c.68: "Primus autem effectus Dei in rebus est ipsum esse, quod omnes alii effectus praesupponunt et super illum fundantur".

[68] *SCG* I, c.22.

[69] *Elements...*, p.142.

metaphysics of being everything is interconnected and that the limited being of things, which is different in each case, cannot be thought otherwise than as a participation in Self-subsistent Being itself[70].

When we deepen our insight into the real distinction between being and essence, it becomes clear that being (*esse*) is the most formal and hence also the most intimate principle of things[71]. Being, it is true, is "exercised" by the existing thing, but it nonetheless has a quasi-formal and quasi-efficient causality in regard to the subject, while it is the first effect of God's creative action[72]. For being is "the reality of all things and also of the forms themselves"[73]. St. Thomas was aware that he was introducing something new with his doctrine of the perfection of being, for he speaks here in the first person, in order to give special emphasis to his use of the term: "That which I call being is of all things the most perfect"[74]. Metaphysics aims at the knowledge of being (*esse*), and therefore also of the Source of being, God.

The characteristics of being

In the same way as being is what is most intimate and deepest in things, so it is that which gives stability and rest[75]. Being is the reality of a thing, the *actus entis*[76], the realization of the essence[77]. In some texts, however, St. Thomas writes that the form gives being[78], makes something be in reality[79] or also that everything exists through its form[80]. In these passages Aquinas confirms that the form makes a being into a particular thing. However, unlike Aristotle, he does not hold that the form *on its own* gives being: "Being follows the form of creatures *per se*, but presupposes God's action, just as light follows on the translucency of the air, if the action of the sun is present"[81]. "Being stands to the form as

[70] *De potentia*, q.1, a.1: "Esse dicit aliquid perfectum sed non subsistens".

[71] I 8, 1: "Esse autem quod est magis intimum cuilibet et quod profundius inest, cum sit formale respectu omnium quae in re sunt".

[72] *In Librum de causis*, prop.4, l.4, nn.93-105.

[73] I 4, 1 ad 4.

[74] *De potentia*, q.7, a.2 ad 9: "...hoc quod dico esse est inter omnia perfectissimum". Cf. *In V Phys.*, l.5, n.693.

[75] *SCG* I, c.20: "...aliquid fixum et quietum in ente".—Before Aquinas St. Augustine had pointed out that the meaning of being is immutability. Cf. his *Sermo VII: PL* 38,66: "Esse est nomen incommutabilitatis". His Platonism shows through this remark.

[76] *De veritate*, q.10, a.8 ad 12.

[77] *In I Sent.*, d.19, q.5, a.1 obi.1. Cf. I 54, 1; *In III Sent.*, d.6, q.2, a.2.

[78] I 54, 1; *In I Sent.*, d.26, q.1, a.6 ad 2: "Forma est quae dat esse".

[79] *De princ. naturae*,l,n.340: "Forma facit esse in actu".

[80] *In I De caelo*, l.6, n.62: "Unumquodque est per suam formam".

[81] I 104, 1 ad 1. *SCG* II, c.54. The *per se* is difficult to translate. It denotes that being is

something which through itself (*per se*) follows on it, but not as an effect follows the active power of an agent..."[82]. This means that the form is the cause of being in the order of formal causality: the form makes the substance real because it itself becomes real due to God's action[83]. Here we see again that the composition of being and essence is not a mechanical combination of components, but consists of mutual causal processes. Being is the most determining element, as it brings a thing to reality and hence gives all perfection[84]; but nonetheless the form "exercises" existence and being is the most profound act of the form.

Since being (*esse*) in its deepest core is that which gives reality, it is more than just being this or that, even more than being a human being[85]. Being of itself has no extension like the body which is brought to reality by being[86]. Being is undividedness[87]. It is only accidentally subject to change: in itself it remains in the state of a permanent 'now'[88]. Thus temporality is not essential to being[89]. And therefore it is clear that being is much more than an accidentally occurring actuality.

In 1946 some Thomists began to speak of the dynamism of being and they called this an activity[90]. Gilson did not hesitate to join them[91]. These authors appealed to a text in which St. Thomas writes that striving for the end and resting in it are of the same nature, and that both pertain to being[92]. They argued that being is a dynamic force: to be is to act and to strive for a goal. However, the text mentioned above does not permit us to connect "striving" and "resting" directly with being (the text states that something which has the nature of an end is desired, and that when it is attained, one rests in it). Nonetheless we must concede that being contains the highest activity, but then activity in its most fundamental form: doing and acting on the accidental level correspond to the substantial being at a deeper level and give expression to what it wants to realize. In this sense being may be called a basic activity. However, it is not a pulsating activity, one which continually takes on other forms; it is the permanent concentration of the reality of a being which continues to exist in its identity. In this sense one may say with St. Thomas that being gives permanency and is a point of rest in becoming[93].

Every theory which seeks to attribute to being a self-transcendence must be rejected, because in each thing being realizes precisely this or that essence. It is absolutely impossible to reduce the being of things to moments in the movement of the mind towards being[94].

From the account we have given it follows that being is more valuable than the essence of which it is the realization and the perfection[95]. In the formation of the concept of being (*esse*) as in that of common being (*esse commune*) which is the subject of metaphysical thought, the first and the second operations of the intellect are inseparable, although they do not coincide[96]: while the judgement concerns the existing reality which it affirms or denies, the first operation of the mind (which is called *simplex apprehensio* and forms concepts) produces a concept of what the intellect knows, thus also of what is affirmed or denied in the judgement.

Conclusion

The explanations given above make it possible to harmonize to some extent the varying standpoints of Maritain, Gilson and Fabro: if we consider the intuition of being mentioned by Maritain as the contact with reality which we have in judgements (with the aid of the sense-faculties), it seems possible to accept his view of an intuition of being. Maritain also rightly asserted that there are various levels in our understanding of being: the level at which we know 'being real' in general; secondly, that

not an accidental predicate (against Avicenna) and that a form is never without being; it is the nature of the form to demand being.

[82] *Quaestio disp. de anima*, a.14, ad 4.

[83] *De spir. creat.*, a.1, ad 5.

[84] I 7, 1: "...illud quod est maxime formale omnium..."; *Q.d. de anima*, a.1, ad 17.

[85] III 16, 9 ad 2; *De veritate*, q.22, a.6 ad 1.

[86] *SCG* I, c.20.

[87] I 11, 1.

[88] *De potentia*, q.5, a.1 ad 2; *SCG* I, c.20 ("aliquid fixum et quietum in ente").

[89] See B. Lakebrink, "Der thomistische Seinsbegriff...", (n.66), p.219ff.

[90] In particular G. Phelan, "The Existentialism of St. Thomas", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 1946, pp.35f. Kierkegaard's statement that existence itself or existing is a sort of striving, did perhaps influence this view (see G. Diem (edit.), *S. Kierkegaard. Philosophische-theologische Schriften*, Köln-Olten 1959, p.222 (from *Unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift*, II,c.2,2).

[91] *Being and Some Philosophers*, Toronto 1949.

[92] *De veritate*, q.21, a.2.

[93] *SCG* I, c.20. J. Owens, "Aquinas-Existential Permanence and Flux", *Mediaeval Studies* 31(1969) 71-92, is inclined to limit the *esse fixum* to God. It is true that in the full sense of the term only God's being does not know "have been" and "will be", but it would nevertheless seem that the text we quoted applies to the being of substances which remains the same as long as the particular substance exists. But despite its fixity, created being is carried through the successive instances of time: today my own existence is no longer yesterday. Cf. *De veritate*, q.21, a.4 ad 7.

[94] *Cf. De ente et essentia*,c.5; *De potentia*, q.7,a.2 ad 6; I 3, 4 ad 1; *In Dion. De div.nom.*, c.5, l.2, nn.658-660.

[95] Cf. *In I Sent.*, d.17,q.1, a.2 ad 3: "Esse est nobilius omnibus aliis quae consequuntur esse. Unde esse est simpliciter nobilius quam intelligere".

[96] J. Owens, "Aquinas on Knowing Existence", in *Review of Metaphysics* XXIX (1976)670-690, thinks that the difference between the two operations has no importance, but certain unequivocal statements of St. Thomas refute this view. See *In IV Metaph.*, l.6, n.605.

of the metaphysical knowledge of being, and finally, that of the being which we ascribe to God. —Gilson, on the other hand, is correct when he emphasizes that the concept of being is an abstract concept, even if this does not mean that it does not express the reality of individual being at all. —Fabro has the great merit of having pointed out what has been called the intensive meaning of being, scil. perfection, but he does not adequately see that this sense of the word is dependent on its basic meaning of *actualitas*, which we reach in judgement. This explains also why Fabro so sharply reduces the function of the judgement in the formation of the concept of being.

Finally, in what we have said above we also find a reply to the criticism of analytical thinkers who reproach scholasticism for systematic misuse of the verb 'to be'. They claim that this verb is used continually in a dual meaning, namely that of the copula and of a metaphysical sense of being. The latter, they hold, is derived from the copula and hence does not have a thing as its object any more than the copula. Consequently this use must be rejected[97].

However, the explanations given above have made it clear that the meaning of the copula is not the basic meaning of 'to be': first of all there is an experience of reality of individually existing things. By means of an abstraction we form the concept 'being real', a concept which contains a reference to a "something" which is real. For this reason the copula "is" can be formed from the verb which expresses this being real. The copula signifies a composition. Hence, there is a reality which corresponds to the verb 'to be', namely the being real of existing things which on each occasion is different. This is expressed by us by means of an abstract, general concept. Upon further study it appears that a form of being (*esse*) exists which is not ordained to a particular limiting subject, but is Self-subsistent Being itself (God). In this way an even more profound reality corresponds to our concept of being, which as a result of this insight becomes analogous in a new manner.

[97] Cf. G. Frege, *Nachgelassene Schriften* (hrsg. von H. Hermes *et alii*),Hamburg 1969, p.71, who speaks of a divinisation of the copula; B. Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, London 1953, 172; R. Carnap, "Ueberwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache", in *Erkenntnis* 2(1931), 219-241, pp.233ff.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ESSENCE

Having discussed the act of being, we must now examine the nature and place of the principle of being called essence. Opinions about what essence is differ greatly. While for some the essence is merely a logical factor or a purely potential limitation of being, others make the essence of things dependent on man, who, they say, must determine himself the meaning and value of reality. Others again consider essence as a subsistent "reality" which coincides with being. Between a substantialist view of essence on the one hand, and its reduction to a logical or purely potential factor on the other the theories of Avicenna (who ascribes a kind of entity to essence) and of St. Thomas must be placed.

Essentia is the Latin translation of the Greek term οὐσία and was coined possibly by Cicero[1]. The original meaning of οὐσία is "being for me" (property). This meaning developed in two directions: a) the term gradually came to refer to essence: being, which is accessible to knowledge; the formal aspect in things; the whatness; a class of being (in an ordered universe); b) moreover οὐσία came to signify also the reality or subsistence of the different things. In Aristotle the term is found in both meanings, although the meaning of "this existing thing" (substance) predominate[2]. In Plato, on the other hand the term mainly refers to the essence of things and the formal element[3].

A survey of some theories of essence

Socrates was the first to raise the question of the whatness of things, recognised its importance and hunted for its definition[4]. In his earlier dialogues Plato brings on stage a Socrates who in a dialogue with his partners tries to answer the question "what is it?" with regard to ethical values. Socrates appears to have carried out an analysis of such values as justice, piety, courage, friendship. He drew up provisional definitions

[1] Cf. Seneca, *Epist. ad Luc.*, 58.—Quintilianus attributes the term to Flavius Fabianus (*Orat. Instit.*, II,c.14).

[2] *Metaph.* 1017 b 10-26. See B. Weber, De οὐσίας apud Aristotelem notione eiusque cognoscendi ratione, Bonn 1887 and J.G. Deniger, *'Wahres Sein' in der Philosophie des Aristoteles*, Meisenheim-Glan 1961, 73-77.

[3] See H.H. Berger, *OUSIA in de dialogen van Plato*, Leiden 1961.

[4] See Aristoteles, *Metaph.* 1078 b 27ff.

which were then corrected. To carry out this program Socrates used induction. Plato continued the study of the essence of things and came to the insight that the pure whatness of things exists outside of these things themselves, as pure forms in the world of Ideas. He developed a method, namely dichotomy, in order to determine these whatnesses and to express them in a definition. By means of this method Plato aimed as well at making possible a reduction of all specific essences to the first principles, the One and the Indeterminate Dyad. Aristotle, too, raised the question of the essence of things and developed rules for the setting up of definitions which reflect essences. The essence is that which a thing is in itself, excluding accidental complexes. Thus, for example, being a musician falls outside the essence of man.

In his theory of the intertwinement of the Forms (ἡ συμπλοκὴ τῶν εἰδῶν) Plato placed various forms (or at least participations of these) in concrete things. These forms are actually separated, although attached to one another However, according to Aristotle the essence (which is what answers the τὸ τί ἐστιν question) is a strict unity, which can however arise from components, which are the physical factors of being. But the genus mentioned in a definition of the essence and the specific differences are only logically distinct from one another. The genus as such does not exist. From a methodological point of view, Aristotle's exclusion of accidental complexes is of great importance. In phenomenology, on the contrary, the latter are elevated to objects for the *Wesensschau* and are viewed as equivalent to things existing as substances or to simple forms. But in this way the ontological structure of reality is neglected, and logical complexes take the place of the predicaments.

Against Plato Aristotle emphasizes that the essence cannot be outside the thing itself[5]. In addition to the expression τὸ τί ἐστιν Aristotle also uses the terms τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (what was it (this or that) to be) to denote the essential, permanent being of a thing. The latter expression does not coincide entirely with τὸ τί ἐστιν as it refers exclusively to the formal element, while τὸ τί ἐστιν can also mean the concrete whole. As the expression intimates, the formal element of things is their essence[6]. Concrete matter no longer comes under this expression, but the terms do

[5] *Metaph.* 1039 a 33ff.

[6] Cf. J. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in Aristotelian Metaphysics*[4], Toronto 1963, pp.180-188. We cannot quote here the rather numerous studies of this expression. For a survey see F. Caujolle Zaslawski, "Aristote: sur quelques traductions récentes de τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι", *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 113 (1981)61-75.

contain a reference to matter in general, because certain formal essences cannot be conceived without matter. The analyses given by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Z (VII) show the immense complexity of the question of the essence of things.

Avicenna's position with regard to the essence deserves to be mentioned. In Chapter XII an account was given of the fact that Avicenna does hold the real distinction between essence and being, but considers being an accident which is added to the essence. Avicenna, at least according to the text of the Latin translation, attributes to essence a degree of being (*esse*), prior to the act of existing which posits it in the nature of things[7]. This being which is attributed to essence is entirely different on the one hand from the realized essence, and on the other hand from the logical existence of the essence (as a universal concept) in intellectual knowledge. The essence, before being attached to existence, is already itself without being any other individual determination. Thus, according to Avicenna, the essence is characterized by a certain anteriority in regard to being, which is added to it.

This theory of Avicenna exercised a great influence on Scotus, who considers being in three states, viz. a physical, a metaphysical and a logical one[8]. In his view essence has an entity and unity of its own. The individual comes into existence when individuality is added to essence; the result is a composition between the essence and the *modus individualis*[9].

Aquinas' theory of essence

St. Thomas gives the following introductory consideration to the study of the essence of things: "The term essence (*essentia*) necessarily means something which is common to all existing types of things (*naturae*), according to which beings are placed in the various genera and kinds... And because that through which a thing is placed in its own genus and kind is that which the definition signifies, which indicates what the thing is, for this reason the term essence is changed by the philosophers into that of what-ness (*quidditas*). And this is what the Philosopher frequently calls "that which was to be", i.e. that through which a thing is "something". The essence is also called form, since the form signifies the

[7] See *Logica* III (edit.Venice 1508, f.12,r.1).

[8] E. Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot*, p.86.

[9] See J.Owens,"Thomisticand Scotistic Metaphysics",*Mediaeval Studies* 19(1957) 1-14.

fact that each thing is a well-determined something (*certitudo*)[10]... It is also given another name, namely nature..., and we use nature... inasmuch as by the term nature everything is denoted which can be understood by the intellect in any way. For a thing cannot be known intellectually except through its definition and through its essence: and the Philosopher also says this in the fifth book of the *Metaphysics*, namely that every substance is a nature. Nonetheless the term nature used in this way appears to refer to the essence of a thing, to the extent that this is ordained to the proper operation of the thing, as not one thing is deprived of the operation proper to it[11]. The term whatness (*quidditas*) is used on account of what is expressed by the definition, but essence (*essentia*) is used inasmuch as through it and in it a thing has being"[12].

Like Avicenna[13], St. Thomas teaches that being (*ens*) and essence are what is known first by the intellect, with the understanding that we must proceed from the concept of being to that of thing or essence, and essence follows on being insofar as being is divided into the predicaments. This again means that 'thing' or 'essence' can refer to the content not just of substance, but also of accidents (something which the Greek term οὐσία denotes only exceptionally). But it is true that essence is said most properly of the substance.

Material things, St. Thomas continues in the *De ente et essentia*, are composed of matter and form. Both belong to the essence and definition, since not only form but also matter is a constituent of material things[14]. The definition of a thing is concerned with general essence, and hence concrete and individual matter is not considered in the study of the essence[15]. For this reason that which is proper to Socrates as this human being does not come under the essence, although in the existing individual the essence is always determined individually. Both the genus and the species express the essence, but each in a different way. The genus

[10] This term "certitudo" is the translation of the Arab word *haqiqa*, one of the expressions by means of which the essence is denoted (viz. as the being known by the intellect). See A.-M. Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sînâ*, Paris 1937, p.33.

[11] John Scot Eriugena calls *essentia* the essence insofar as it exists in divine knowledge, but he uses *natura* to denote the essence of existing things (*De divisione naturae*, V, c.3).

[12] *De ente et essentia*, c.1. Contrary to Avicenna's view Aquinas states that the essence as such "abstrahit a quolibet esse" (*o.c.*, ch.3).

[13] See Avicenna, *Metaphysica*, tr.1, c.6 (f.72,r.,b A): "Ens et res talia sunt quae statim in anima imprimuntur prima impressione".

[14] *In VII Metaph.*, l.9, n.1467. Cf. *De ente et essentia*, c.2.

[15] Here is meant that matter as responsible for individuation and connected with the individual characteristics is not contained in the essence.

signifies in an indeterminate manner that which is contained in the species and therefore the species determines the genus. Because the genus is determined further, it has the character of matter (without itself being matter). But while matter and form as really distinct physical components of being constitute together the essence of material things, the genus and the specific difference (*differentia specifica*) are not two components physically distinct from one another. In the genus the specific essences are already contained, although they are so indeterminately. The genus and the species indicate the existing essence, to the extent that both express that which is contained in the individual[16].

Although our concept of the essence is general, its universality does not belong to the individually existing thing. We do not say that Socrates is a species, but that he is a man. The "being a man" which we ascribe to Socrates is for this reason thought apart from any realization whatever, and it is neither universal nor individual.

It follows that in material things the essence exists as realized individually, even if it is known by us as something universal[17]. For this reason we do not say that the individual is its essence[18]. As a particular realization of the essence it is other than the essence (which is known by us in such a way that we abstract from the individual or accidental). Thus St. Thomas writes that what is proper to the specific essence as such, scil. its universality, belongs to the nature of things only on the level of our thought[19].

In non-composite things, in which there is no matter and thus no individuation, the essence coincides with the simple forms which these substances are. But even in these substances their essence is not their existence: the being of finite things is limited by the subject and cannot be this subject (essence) itself[20]. Only in God essence and being coincide. However, we do not say that he has no essence, but that his essence is his being[21].

It is striking that in explaining the usage of the term essence Aquinas, in his treatise *De ente et essentia*, associates essence with being (*esse*) and thus, as it were, goes back to the substantial meaning of οὐσία but then not so much under the aspect of substance as under that of being.

[16] *De ente et essentia*, c.3.

[17] *Ibidem.*

[18] *O.c.*, c.4: "Non enim potest dici quod homo sit quidditas sua".

[19] *O.c.*, c.3: "Ratio speciei accidat humanae naturae secundum illud esse quod habet in intellectu".

[20] *O.c.*, c.4.

[21] *O.c.*, c.5: "...quia essentia sua non est aliud quam esse suum".

Essence is understood from being, just as potency from act. It has no being of its own preceding its realization in a being. The what-ness, scil. the specific and generic essence of things, is attributed to, is within and is partly identical with the concrete thing. This can also be expressed as follows: in the thing existing as an individual (the so-called first substance, which is neither predicated of a subject, nor is present in a subject), the generic and specific essence (the so-called second substance) is present[22].

The principles of the essence

In this section, as in chapter XII, we mean by essence the concrete subject which is specifically determined and is realized by being. That which does not yet exist, but which is realized later, is manifestly possible. Now a possibility is twofold, namely an intrinsic and an extrinsic possibility. An example of what is meant here is that a 22nd symphony by Beethoven is (or was) (intrinsically) possible in itself, but cannot now be realized, as Beethoven is no longer alive. A square circle, on the other hand, is impossible in itself. Being possible in itself means being a whole with properties compatible with one another. For example, a mollusc which is at the same time a reptile is impossible, because their characteristics mutually exclude each other. What determines the intrinsic possibility? What does it mean to say that something is possible?

According to Avicenna this possibility lies in the essences themselves, which exist as "possible beings" prior to their actual realization. In his view these 'possibles' are independent of God. God only makes that something exists which was already possible. The possibles as possibles precede their realization; they exist as possibles.

St. Thomas could not accept this limitation of God's omnipotence. God precedes the order of created things and is not subject to nature. God is the cause of all things, including possibles (*possibilia*). Thus there are no possibles independent of God. That which makes something possible is not an independent order of possible essences, but God's essence itself, to the extent that it can be imitated and communicated. The modes of being of created things are modes in which it is possible to participate in God's essence. God knows his essence, for he is self-knowledge, and so he knows and constitutes the so-called *possibilia*[23].

The essence of things can accordingly be defined as a finite manner

[22] Aristotle, *Categoriae* 2 a 11.

[23] See B. Zedler, "Saint Thomas and Avicenna on *De potentia Dei*", in *Traditio* VI (1948), 104-159, p.140ff. Cf. our *The Philosophical Theology* ..., pp. 242ff.

of participating in God's essence. "Every creature has its own specific essence to the extent that it participates in one way or another in a likeness with God's essence. Hence, God, inasmuch as he knows his own essence as imitable by such a creature, knows it as the basic plan and idea of this creature"[24]. We can also express this as follows: things are born from God as he knows and considers his essence. Essences exist because God conceives them. The essences of created things are knowable and light up to the human intellect because they come from God. The necessary and immutable essences have their ultimate explanation not in changeable things themselves, but in the Principle of being in which they participate.

Unlike Plato and the philosophers of his School, St. Thomas does not derive the existence of these essences in a Cause outside the things themselves from the certainty of our knowledge. The latter is primarily the result of abstraction and (as regards the principles of being) is based on the compelling, evident knowledge which the things themselves give us. Only in a mediate manner can we reduce the many truths of our knowledge to the one Truth.

Some modern opinions about essence

J.-P. Sartre in his own way is a witness to the accuracy of the above when he writes that "there is no human nature, because there is no God to think it". "Man, he says, first exists and appears in the world; only later he determines himself". "Man is nothing other than that into which he makes himself"[25]. The basic principle of Sartre's existentialism is the exclusion of essence in order to clear in this manner the way for the spontaneity of existence and for the absolute autonomy of man, who is dependent on no-one and nothing, but who makes himself. God does not exist, and from this "fact", Sartre writes, the following conclusions must be drawn, the total responsibility of man, on the one hand, and the experience of anxiety in regard to the meaningless things surrounding us on the other[26].

From the above it is equally clear that being as conceived by the existentialists cannot be reduced to the *esse* in the philosophy of St.

[24] I 15, 2.

[25] *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, pp.21f.

[26] Sartre speaks about the essences of other things only inasmuch as man must determine these essences. Before man concerns himself with natural things and begins to use them, the latter are a meaningless part of a blind natural process; their meaning is dependent on what man sees in them or uses them for.

Thomas: in existentialism being, particularly that of man, is radical subjectivity and freedom, while the being of things loses its meaning and becomes a challenge or threat, but in any case is brought into relation with man. According to St. Thomas being is reality and perfection, because it is the being of a meaningful essence which it realizes.

Existentialists like Heidegger did not grasp this. They see the history of the entire Western philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche as a period in which being was forgotten and essence as such turned into reality[27]. It is true that the essentialist approach has widely dominated both in philosophy in general[28] as well as in scholasticism[29]; but this reproach does not hold for St. Thomas. On the other hand, the existentialists go to the opposite extreme by depriving contingent being of its order to essence. It becomes then a terrifying abyss of contingency, an absurdity, or being which is subordinate to its function for man[30]. A criticism similar to that of the existentialists is voiced by Philippe Benoist, who sees in Plato's doctrine of the logos, self-identity and universality the start of an offensive against difference, being different and heterogeneity. Plato's thought, he writes, has led to the domination of the norm, science and the state. In order to discover difference, the possibility of change and spontaneity, we must abandon Plato and return to Heraclitus[31]. In this connection one may also mention that Hegel developed a dialectical ontology in which possibility is the reality which returns to itself[32]. For Hegel possibility holds an indeterminate multiplicity in itself and hence also dialectical contrast, so that in this sense the possible is not only identical with itself but is also at the same time its opposite[33]. This theory is fundamentally different from that of Aquinas and scowls at the principle of contradiction.

Aquinas' doctrine of the *possibilia* does not attribute a weakened

[27] See Max Müller, *Existenzphilosophie im geistigen Leben der Gegenwart*², Heidelberg 1958, p.15.

[28] See above, Chapters XII and XIII. According to Leibniz essence is a real possibility which by its nature demands to exist ("...exigere sua natura existentiam"). Without this inclination of essence, nothing would exist: *Die philosophischen Schriften* (Gerhardt, VII, p.194).

[29] Compare, for example, this text of D.J. Mercier: "L'essence est la source originelle de toutes les perfections d'un être" *(Métaphysique générale ou ontologie*⁷, Louvain-Paris 1923, p.29).

[30] Heidegger considers being as "to be there (be)for(e) man" or to be available (*Vorhandensein*). Cf. his *Sein und Zeit*, p.42.

[31] *Tyrannie du Logos*, Paris 1975, pp.14-20.

[32] *Wissenschaft der Logik*, II (Theorie Werkausgabe, p.208ff.).

[33] *L.c.*: "Was real möglich ist, ist also...ein formelles identisches..., aber zweitens...ist es ein Widersprechendes". See also B. Lakebrink, *Hegels dialektische Ontologie und die thomistische Analektik*, Ratingen 1968, p.185.

existence of its own to non-realized essences, but places the *possibilia* in God's thought. In the 14th and 15th centuries, however, the subtle equilibrium of this doctrine was forgotten, and an author like Ockham spoke of the absolute power of God (*potentia Dei absoluta*) as the basis for that which we experience as possible. All hypotheses which we conceive depend on God's omnipotence alone. For instance, man is not possible because of his essence, but is possible if he is ("Si homo est, homo est homo"); only God's will determines whether anything will exist. Ockham and the nominalists of his School accordingly deny the essence of things as an objective possibility independent of actual existence. In their view the world only consists of contingent, individual things[34]. An entirely different view was defended by the Scotists Francis of Mayroni and Nicholas Bonet in the 14th century: possible essences, before they are created by God, have an "essential" existence (*existentia essentialis*), which lies midway between their presence in thought and their existence in reality.

According to St. Thomas the *possibilia* are ways in which created beings participate in God's essence, as it is known by God as participable. If God gives existence to something, a mode of participation is realized, and this means that God, together with and in created being (*esse*) also produces the essence as the subject, which is a limitation and determination of this being. The realized essence is also called *esse essentiae* by St. Thomas[35].

Different views on essence among Thomists

In existing things the essence is a limiting principle which causes the particular content of beings, but which does not exist as a reality on its own, separately from being (*esse*). It is only through being that its content is realized and becomes a real component of the one being, together with the *esse* which is really distinct from it.

In Thomism the essence is a real principle of all beings and this brings with it the danger that the essence might be reified. Some Thomists do indeed speak of the *realitas essentiae*, and we read, for example, in J. Gredt, who follows John of St. Thomas, that between pure nothingness and existence there is a third something, namely the reality of the essence. Gredt writes that this reality can be called a being, provided by

[34] See P.Vignaux, *Nominalisme au XIV^e siècle*, Paris 1948, pp.27ff.

[35] See *In I Sent.*, d.33, q.1, a.1 ad 1.

this term one does not mean the being of existence, but the physical reality of the essence. This reality is already an act, but not yet the last act (existence); it is related to this last act as a potency[36]. But this manner of describing the essence is less accurate: an essence cannot occur alone; it receives the only reality which it has from being which realizes essence as act does a potency.

Because St. Thomas calls being the act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections, some Thomists came to consider the essence no longer as a principle of being with a content of its own[37]. In their view the essence is only a limiting factor, 'contracting' being, by means of which being gives itself a limited content of being. In this vision the essence is reduced to a kind of empty potency. W.E. Carlo asserts that the essence does not receive being but is its intrinsic specification and limit[38]. J. de Finance, in an early work, also considered essence itself a pure nothing[39], although he later reached a more positive position: limited being (*esse*) on its own can neither exist nor be thought; for this reason the essence is necessary, which accordingly in a sense is the principle of the intelligibility of being[40].

A total reduction of essence to a potency without content is untenable: if this were so, multiplicity and the ordering of things would no longer be explained, but made dependent on being's (blind) impulse to realize. Essence would no longer be a participation in God's essence; the mutual causality of being and essence would be deprived of its meaning.

Conclusion

From the above it is clear how difficult it is to speak of essence as a real principle of beings[41]. Essence has its reality only within a being, dependent on the power of realization of the *esse* which, when considered absolutely, precedes as "God's first creature"[42]. However, because the *esse* and essence are simultaneous in concrete beings, the essence also

[36] See his *Elementa philosophiae aristotelico-thomisticae*[10], II, p.111.

[37] Cf. Gerald Phelan, "The Being of Creatures", in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, XXI(1957)118ff.

[38] "The Role of Essence in Existential Metaphysics. A Reappraisal", in *Intern. Philos. Quarterly* 2 (1962)557-590; id., *The Ultimate Reducibility of Essence to Existence in Existential Metaphysics*, The Hague 1966.

[39] *Etre et agir*, Paris 1945, p.122.

[40] *O.c.*, 3me édition, Rome 1966, p.XXI.

[41] Cf. Aimé Forest, *La structure métaphysique du concret*, p.164: "Ainsi toutes les formes de réalité que nous pourrions attribuer à l'essence, semblent nous échapper".

[42] See the previous chapter.

exercises its own causality on being: on the one hand the essence is realized, becomes an actually existing essence and receives being as potency its act. Besides this basic causality of the essence (reducible to material causality) essence also has a specifying, determining function, to the extent that the act of being it receives is ordained towards the realization of precisely this essence and for this reason is this particular mode of being.

Finally it should be recalled here that in those things which exist as individuals the essence (e.g. being a dog) is realized individually: the species dog exists nowhere in nature, but is really present in the individual dog, not as a physical component which together with the individuality would constitute this dog, but as the core of the essence of this dog, which is realized individually. The intellect abstracts the essence 'dog' from the individual dog and forms a general concept which does not exist in its universality in the individual things.

At this juncture we must face the question as to how the individual participates in the universal form, i.e. the question of the possibility and the ways of participation. This question is all the more important, now that we have seen that the contingent, multiple and limited things are not their own being, and thus manifestly participate in being.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PARTICIPATION

Things do not exist in sheer multiplicity, but they are also related to one another in numerous ways: substantial as well as accidental forms with the same content are found in various subjects, and all beings share in the same properties. Metaphysics considers the connections between things, in partcular how things can be reduced to a certain unity. This question is partly the question of what is called participation, i.e. having a part in something, sharing in it in a limited way.

The question of participation is of great importance in Aquinas' metaphysics. We may even say that, to a certain extent, his doctrine of the participation of being determines the character of his philosophy. On some of his contemporaries St. Thomas made the impression that he rejected Augustinianism[1] and replaced Platonism by Aristotelianism. In fact, many have viewed St. Thomas as a typically Aristotelian thinker (who here and there took over some Platonic material). However, in recent years more and more emphasis has been laid on the presence of fundamental Platonic insights in Thomism[2]. The doctrine of participation is considered one of these Platonic elements taken over by Aquinas, developed by him in a way proper to him (in his metaphysics of being) and made the basis of his philosophy.

The historical background of the doctrine of participation

Although participation occupies a central position in Plato's philosophy, relatively few studies have been devoted to it[3]. Convinced of the total mutability of sublunar things, Plato felt that the foundation of the certainty of man's scientific knowledge must be different. In this way he came to consider the various formal determinations of things as a

[1] See F. Ehrle, "John Peckam über den Kampf des Augustinismus und Aristotelismus im 13.Jahrhundert", in *Zeitschrift für kathol. Theologie* 13(1889)186.

[2] See the important study of C. Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S.Tommaso d'Aquino*[3], Torino 1963; id., *Participation et causalité selon S.Thomas d'Aquin*[2], Louvain-Paris 1961; L.-B. Geiger, *La participation dans la philosophie de S.Thomas d'Aquin*[2], Paris 1953. One may also compare A. Hayen, *La communication de l'être d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Desclée de Brouwer) 1959.

[3] See Sir David Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*[2], Oxford 1953, p.221f.; H. Meinhardt, *Teilhabe bei Platon*, Freiburg-München 1968.

participation in or a (limited) imitation of Forms which exist by themselves in purity and are eternal, unchangeable and necessary: the definition of a thing, which Socrates had sought so industriously, could not be a definition of anything existing in the world of becoming, since all material things are subject to a continuous process of change (*flux*). But these definitions refer to models of what we see here before us. Material things, man himself, his thoughts as well as ethical values exist through a participation (μεθέξις. μετοχή) in these Forms. The Forms are the subject of scientific thought. Every Idea is a unity which can be distributed over many things (τὸ ἓν ἐπὶ τῶν πολλῶν). The Ideas are separated from the world of becoming but nonetheless present in it. The concrete thing has something of the Eidos (Idea) in itself. Plato describes this relationship to the Ideas as a presence of the latter in the concrete things and in this way he acknowledges a certain immanence of the Ideas[4]. But he also frequently points out that the Ideas are *outside* things and belong to a sphere of being of their own (the world of Ideas).

Plato developed this doctrine under the influence of Pythagoreanism, which made the nature of things dependent on numbers. Parmenides' insight that there exists a necessary, unchangeable Being always identical with itself contributed also to the development of this theory. Furthermore the necessity of finding a permanent basis for scientific knowledge and the discovery of formal causality (cf. infra) were of decisive importance for Plato. In his later period Plato studied also the mutual relationships between the Ideas, and he sought to derive the Ideas from two principles, the One and the Indeterminate Dyad.

Plato now considered that the Ideas do not enter the concrete things[5] but exist on their own apart from the material world. This presupposes that the Ideas have only an exemplary causality with regard to material things[6]. The commentators Asclepius and Syrianus struggled with the problem how to explain the causality of the Ideas. They excluded a direct formal causality, because the Ideas do not totally or partly enter the things[7]. If so, their influence can only be exemplary causality: the Ideas act as models together with nature in order to form things[8].

Aristotle rejects Plato's doctrine of Ideas and reproaches the Platonists with τὸ λογικῶς ζητεῖν, i.e. an extrapolation of logical categories in

[4] In particular in the dialogues prior to the *Phaedo*.

[5] *Timaeus* 51 b - 52 d.

[6] Plato used rather frequently such verbs as ἀπεικάζεσθαι, ἀφομοιοῦσθαι, ἀπομιμεῖσθαι to describe the relationship of things to the Ideas.

[7] Asclepius, *In Metaph.*, p.90, 7-9.

[8] *Ibid.*, 84, 21; 85, 27.

reality, because they consider genera and species as substances. In his view the meaning of participation in the Ideas is that things come into being when a form enters a substrate and they perish through its departure[9]. Sensible things in this way become identical with the Ideas, as they participate in the same essence[10]. Moreover, Aristotle observes that one would have to admit also a new Idea of the Idea and of the participated Forms (for both have something in common), if one uses Plato's proofs in favour of the existence of the Ideas (the "Third-Man-Argument")[11].

Aristotle reproaches repeatedly Plato with proposing a concept of participation which lacks clarity. Thus, for example, he writes that Plato does not tell us what exactly the imitation of the Ideas or what participation in the Ideas means[12]. He wonders whether Plato considers participation as a certain mixture of an Idea and a subject which receives it. But does the "pure being" of an Idea permit something of this kind?[13]. Moreover, according to Aristotle Plato should only have accepted Ideas of substances because Ideas are subsistent beings, whereas in fact he also speaks of Ideas of accidents and accidental attributes[14]. Participation is likewise utterly useless in order to explain becoming and movement[15]. Furthermore, Aristotle cannot imagine the use of "imitating" an Idea: a doctor after all does not imitate "health in itself"[16]. The last unsurmountable difficulty for Aristotle is the fact that an Idea like the Good is found in the various categories of being and for this reason it would have an essentially different content in each different instance of good things[17].

Aristotle himself does accept unchangeable formal principles in concrete things. But these principles exist as individual forms and are never general. They are something divine[18]. A few texts of the *Corpus aristotelicum*, however, mention a certain mode of participation. Thus we read in *Metaph.* II (α) 993 b 24 of a "more or less" of forms. The drift of the argument suggests that the more causes the less. In a fragment of

[9] *De gener. et corr.* 335 b 9-16.
[10] See L. Robin, *La théorie platonicienne des idées et des nombres*, Paris 1908, 605ff.
[11] Cf. *Metaph.*, books XIII and XIV.
[12] *Metaph.* 987 b 13.
[13] *Metaph.* 991 a 12ff.
[14] *Metaph.* 990 b 22.
[15] *Ibid.*, 1045 a 30ff.
[16] *Eth. Nicom.* 1097 a 10.
[17] *Eth. Nicom.* I, ch. 4.
[18] *Phys.* 192 a 16. On Aristotle's criticism of the theory of ideas see also H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, New York 1962, pp.223ff.

a lost dialogue one finds also the statement that where there is a better there must also be a best[19].

Plato's theory and the criticisms of Aristotle reached the West via the Latin translations of Aristotle and of the *Timaeus* but also via the writings of Augustine, the pseudo-Dionysius, Proclus, the *Liber de causis*, Avicebron and Avicenna. St. Augustine's metaphysics has a Platonic stamp: this great philosopher and theologian devotes much attention to the participation of beings in God's perfection. "God gave being, to some more and to others less"[20]. The "original forms" of things are in God: all of the things which God made resemble him[21]. St. Augustine describes here what below will be called transcendental participation.

Dionysius' *De divinis nominibus* is entirely based on the doctrine of participation. In the preface to his *Commentary* St. Thomas observes that Dionysius uses mainly the style and manner of expression of the Platonists. In contrast to Plato, however, Dionysius does not suppose the existence of any world of Ideas existing on its own, but places the Forms in the unity of the divine Being which is itself above being and above goodness. In a much-quoted text Dionysius writes that "the gifts of God himself are divided on the level of creatures; they are received only partly; hence we say that creatures participate in them"[22]. In another passage he goes so far as to write that the being of all things is divinity surpassing all substances. However, St.Thomas warns here against an incorrect interpretation: God is not formally, but causally the being of created things[23].

Boethius also accepted the Platonic doctrine of participation, as has been shown in Chapter XII: "That which is" can participate in something: but being itself (as an abstract form) can in no way participate in anything. In this connection Boethius writes that "that which is" first participates in being and thereafter in being something (*esse aliquid*)[24]. This means that Boethius considers the substantial and accidental forms in things a limited participation in the pure forms in God's essence[25]. Thus in a sense he connects the Platonic doctrine of participation with Aristotle's doctrine of being. Nonetheless, Boethius considered the forms in matter as not yet being entirely real: "It is a misuse of language

[19] *De philosophia*, fragm. 16 (Ross) = Simplicius, *In De caelo* 289, 2-3.
[20] *De civ. Dei* XII 2.
[21] *De Genesi ad litt. opus imperf. XVI 57.*
[22] *De divinis nominibus*, c.11.
[23] *In I Sent.*, d.8, q.1, a.2; *SCG* I, c.26.
[24] *De hebdomadibus*, prop.3.
[25] See *SCG* III, c.24.

to call forms the remaining (forms) which are found in material substances"[26].

The *Liber de causis*, which goes back to Proclus and had a major influence on philosophers of the time of Aquinas, promoted also the metaphysics of participation. Its basic idea, scil. that "everything is in everything", will be discussed in the next chapter.

Aquinas' doctrine of participation

In agreement with Aristotle St.Thomas rejects Plato's theory which made the abstract concepts of species and genus subsitent things. As he sees it, Plato assigned a dual role to the Ideas: a) they are models and principles of our knowledge; b) they are principles of the being of material things. As regards Aristotle's criticism of the theory of participation, it is remarkable that St. Thomas weakens it or sometimes does not even mention it. He clarifies the concept of participation by writing that whenever a thing is completely and entirely what it is it does not participate in it, but is of the same essence as that something. "Only when it is not completely and entirely something, because it has something else added to it, do we say that it participates in something"[27]. In his commentary on *Metaph.* 987 b 13 he does not mention Aristotle's criticism of the Platonists (they are said to speak only "vaguely" about participation)[28]. When Aristotle writes that the Platonists are in difficulty when they must explain what participation is, Aquinas weakens these words by commenting: "They investigated the cause and the content of participation"[29]. He emphasizes also that Aristotle's criticism of the function of the Ideas as models does not exclude the fact that God's wisdom is the exemplary cause of all things[30].

Aquinas rejects the theory of Ideas insofar as he asserts that one cannot say that man has something of the animal: man is essentially an animal. In this sense the predication of the genus and of the kind of something is not its participation in this genus or species[31]. St. Thomas,

[26] *De Trinitate*, c.2.

[27] *In I Metaph.*, l. 10, n.154: "Quod enim totaliter est aliquid, non participat illud, sed est per essentiam idem illi; quod vero non totaliter est aliquid, habens aliquid aliud adiunctum, proprie participare dicitur".

[28] *O.c.*, nn.153-156. See H.H. Berger, "Der Partizipationsgedanke im Metaphysikkommentar des Thomas von Aquin", in *Vivarium* I (1963) 115-140.

[29] *In VIII Metaph.*, l.5, n.1765.

[30] *In I Metaph.*, l.15, n.233.

[31] *In VII Metaph.*, l.3, n.1328: "Genus autem non praedicatur de speciebus per participationem sed per essentiam. Homo enim est animal essentialiter...non solum aliquid animalis participans". In other texts Aquinas does accept this relationship of the species to the genus as a type of participation. See below.

moreover, agrees with Aristotle that the content of the good (*ratio boni*), which is predicated of things in various categories, is on each occasion different, according to the category in which the good occurs[32]. But he adds that Aristotle did not wish to reject Plato's opinion "to the extent that Plato accepted one separate Good, on which all good things depend", since in the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle himself accepts a supreme good being, which is separate from the universe and towards which the entire universe is ordained. But he criticizes Plato's view that this separate Good is a certain Idea common to all good things[33].

We should add that in several of his later works St. Thomas asserts that there is a fundamental harmony between Plato and Aristotle. On the other hand he always emphatically rejects the doctrine according to which things are constituted of various, really distinct formal contents and participation is the connection of two formal principles which remain outside one another. St. Thomas deals with this theme in the passages where he studies the question whether things are good by themselves or due to God's goodness. In his reply he recalls the basic principle of Platonism: "Plato posited that those things which can be separated by the intellect are also separate in reality, and as one can think the term "man" apart from Socrates and Plato, he concluded that "man" exists apart from Socrates and Plato, and he called this "man himself" or the Idea of man; by participating in this "man" Socrates and Plato are called men[34].

In this connection St. Thomas reports also the view of the followers of Gilbert of La Porrée who defended the realism of the forms: some of these forms he called *formae inhaerentes* (substance, extension, quality, relation), others *formae assistentes*. Gilbert's theory is characterized by the attempt to reduce real things to intelligible essences; created things exist as "that which is" by virtue of the form, which realizes each of them. For example, the individual man is realized by the form of "being man". Individual things participate in these forms, but the forms themselves do not participate; they are not beings, and in order to participate, something must exist as a subject[35].

This is the theory of Boethius, who places various forms in a subject, which themselves do not exist but each of which realizes a formal content in the subject in its own way. The individual substance possesses

[32] *In I Ethic.*, lectio 6.

[33] *Ibid.* (edit. Leonina, p.222, 87ff.).

[34] *De veritate*, q.21, a.4.

[35] E. Gilson, *La philosophie au moyen âge*², p.265.

an immense variety of forms which do not exist themselves[36]. Gilbert calls this combination of forms *concretio*. In this view a creature is not good (in general) through a goodness proper to it but through the prior goodness of God[37].

Aquinas rejects this theory by appealing to Aristotle: the forms must be intrinsic to the things; moreover, there is not one identical goodness, but goodness is found in the various predicaments. Aquinas does say that God places his own goodness in things, and so things are formally good due to a goodness of their own (received from God). God is the exemplary and efficient cause of this goodness. In the *Summa theologiae* St. Thomas gives the same solution, but adds that "it is nonetheless entirely true that there is a first something which by virtue of its essence is being and good, —and this we call God ... Due to this first being which by virtue of its essence is being and good, everything can be called good and being, insofar as it participates in it by a certain assimilation, although in a remote sense and in the manner of an efficient cause"[38].

In these texts the proper and original character of Aquinas' metaphysics stands out: its points of departure are on the one hand the Aristotelian concept of substance as one being as well as the doctrine of matter and form and on the other the dependence of all things on God. In order to express this dependence St. Thomas uses the Platonic idea of participation, but he gives to it a new and deeper meaning. He uses the principle that "what belongs to a thing essentially is the cause of that which is predicated by way of participation" to apply it to the relationship of God to creatures: "God is being (*ens*) through his essence, for He is being itself: every other being is being through participation, because the being which is its own *esse* can only be one..."[39].

This novel and unique character of St. Thomas' doctrine of participation can also be clarified by the reply which he gave to the problem presented by the deacon John to Boethius. The problem was as follows: if substances are good through their own essence, their essence is identical to their being good. This seems to indicate that all things have the same goodness, with which they are identical by their essence. Boethius replied that because things come from God they are essentially good. However, their goodness is not identical with their substance but

[36] See Gilbert's *Commentary on Boethius' De Trinitate: PL* 64, in particular 1267AB; 1393A.

[37] In limited ways it is good because of created, particular forms of being good.

[38] I 6, 4.

[39] *SCG* II, c.15.

it means their dependence on God. In other words their goodness is a relation which is attributed to things from the outside and is not intrinsically present in them (*determinatio extrinseca*).

St. Thomas points out that Boethius apparently thinks of participation exclusively as the participation of substance in its accidents, and that it is precisely this view which causes the difficulties. If we also call participation the manner in which the individual possesses its specific essence, then something can be in its substance what it possesses through participation, at least, so Aquinas, according to the doctrine of Aristotle[40]. This is not possible according to Plato's view, because Plato holds that there is no total substantial unity and no essential likeness between the individual, the species and the genus.

In his *Commentary* on Boethius' treatise St. Thomas sets forth the following division of the modes of participation[41]:

(a) We call participation the sharing in the genus by the species and the sharing of the individual in both the genus and the species. For instance, Socrates may be said to participate in 'man'. For Socrates is not all of humanity, although he is essentially man. This is the weakest form of participation, because the individual possesses the entire content of the species (and the species that of the genus), and not merely a part of it. The limitation lies in the particular manner in which 'being man' is realized in the individual: "The more common universal is compared to the less common as a whole to its part; as a whole, namely, to the extent that in the more common not merely the less common is contained as in potency, but other things as well...; as a part to the extent that the less general in the content of its concept not merely contains the more common, but also other things"[42].

According to Plato, this is the only mode of participation, for he knew only of univocal participation in the pure Forms of the world of Ideas. St. Thomas maintains this mode of participation, apparently as an introduction to and a preparation for his own theory of participation. It allowed him to deliminate the real participation (sub c) with which he is primarily concerned, namely non-univocal transcendental participation, which he announces, as usual, with little ceremony and inconspicuously as a sequel to what the great philosophers before him had already

[40] *In Boetii De hebdomadibus*, lectio 3, nn.44f.

[41] *Ibid.*, lectio 2, n.24.

[42] I 85, 3 ad 2. Cf. *In VII Metaph.*, l.3, n.1328.

discovered. He can maintain this first form of participation (although in a different meaning to that of Plato!), for a structure of being underlies these logical constructions ("Socrates is a man" etc.), namely the fact that a specific or generic essence is found in a great number of individuals or species.

Among Thomists there is some confusion in regard to the name of this first kind of participation. Thus C. Fabro calls it, together with the next kind of participation (b) "the predicamental participation" because one remains here on the level of created being. But it is better, as is shown by the account given above, to keep a) and b) neatly separate and to call this first manner of participation logical participation. —In his treatment of this participation L. Geiger draws attention to the fact that for St. Thomas participation is not necessarily the result of composition (individual, species, and genus do coincide really in Socrates), but that it formally exists in a relationship of likeness and unlikeness between the conditions in which one and the same form can occur[43].

Against this view, however, one can argue that this kind of participation necessarily presupposes multiplicity and limitation and that, as was shown in Chapter XII (in the third argument for the real distinction), multiplicity and limitation presuppose composition. Thus even for this logical participation there is a basis in the being of things: in material substances the composition of primary matter and substantial form (matter is the principle of the multiplication of individuals) and in spiritual beings the composition of being and essence, (insofar as one essence is closer to God than others). Composition, then, is the basis for the multiplicity of individuals and species, but logical participation itself, as Geiger rightly notes, is not a composition of really distinct forms, in contrast to what many mediaeval thinkers of the Platonizing Augustinian School assumed[44].

Needless to remind that one cannot turn this first form of participation into the main mode of participation in Thomism, as Geiger appears to do. In some passages Aquinas even denies that the sharing in the species or the genus by the individual can be called participation[45] and hence the least we can say is that this mode of participation is not the purest or most important form of participation for Aquinas. The genus and the species

[43] See L. Geiger, *o.c.*, (n.2), p.52.

[44] See L. Geiger, "Participation", in "Bulletin de métaphysique", *Revue des sciences philos. et théol.* 34(1950)349-351.

[45] Cf. *In I Metaph.*, l.10, n.154: "Quod enim totaliter est aliquid, non participat illud sed est per essentiam idem illi. Quod vero non totaliter est aliquid, habens aliquid aliud adiunctum, proprie participare dicitur". See also *In VII Metaph.*, l.3, n.1328.

do not in any case constitute an ontological reality of their own in which the individual or the kind could participate. Furthermore, in the individual, the species and the genus there is identity of essential content. What Aquinas concedes to Plato is that in some particular respect an individual (or the species) does not express everything enclosed in the species (or in the genus).

(b) The second mode of participation mentioned by St. Thomas is that of the substance which "has" an accident and of matter which receives a form. Primary matter is of such a nature that it can be determined by various forms, while also substance is in potency with regard to a great variety of accidental determinations (which can sometimes be of lesser or greater extent or intensity). That which is proper to this so-called predicamental participation consists in the fact that a form is limited to this matter or to this substance[46]. This participation is based on the relationship of potency to act. It is striking that St. Thomas expresses here in the terminology of participation the Aristotelian doctrine of matter and form and of the relationship of a substance to its accidents. It was apparently his intention, having corrected Plato's theory of participation and having made it usable, to show that even a most characteristic tenet of Aristotle's philosophy can be formulated with the aid of the term participation. In this manner Thomas brought Plato and Aristotle closer to one another, and he intimated that both of them prepared his own development of the doctrine of participation (sub c).

C. Fabro regards the fact that there is a broad scale of forms with greater or lesser perfection as the basis for this mode of participation[47]. This view will be dealt with in the next chapter. Ultimately, however, the possibility of this multiplicity is dependent on matter (with regard to material things) and on the composition of being and essence (with regard to spiritual substances).

(c) The third mode of participation, which St. Thomas mentions in his *Commentary on the De hebdomadibus*, concerns causality: fire heats and brings about an effect to which it communicates its own nature. We speak of participation when the effect only partly expresses the fullness of being of the cause[48]. As Fabro remarks, this mode of participation

[46] *Expos. in Boetii De Hebdomadibus*, l.2, n.24: "...quae de sui ratione communis est, determinatur ad hoc vel illud subiectum".

[47] *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione...*, p.168.

[48] *O.c.*, lectio 2, n.24: "Est autem participare quasi partem capere et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet universaliter, dicitur participare illud, sicut homo dicitur participare animal, quia non habet rationem animalis secundum totam communitatem; et eadem ratione Socrates participat hominem. Similiter etiam subiectum participat accidens, et materia formam, quia forma substantialis vel accidentalis, quae de sua

contradicts Boethius' argument: while according to Boethius the abstract form of being participates in no way in anything else[49], St. Thomas accepts this manner of participation in God's being: creatures, however, do not participate in God in the sense of possessing a part of divine being. This is entirely excluded because of God's transcendence. Things participate in God to the extent that God communicates himself in a different manner to each of them and attunes the being he gives, to each particular subject[50].

It should be noted that the created subject has being through a participation of mode b): the relationship of the subject to its being is analogous to that of matter to form. Viewed from the standpoint of created being (actus essendi), this being is a participation in God's being in the third mode of participation. A similar observation must be made in regard to the relationship of a substance to its accidents. As we have seen under b) substances participate in the formal contents of accidents. But to the extent that the substance is the ontological basis of its accidents St. Thomas writes also that with regard to their being accidents accidents participate in a proportional likeness to substances[51].

By introducing this kind of participation and applying it to the relationship of creatures to the infinitely perfect divine Efficient Cause, Aquinas was able to express the dependence of creatures on God in the terminology of participation.

ratione communis est, determinatur ad hoc vel ad illud subiectum. Et similiter effectus dicitur participare suam causam; et praecipue quando non adaequat virtutem suae causae; puta si dicamus quod aër participat lucem solis, quia non recipit eam ea claritate quae est in sole".

[49] *De Hebdom.* (*PL* 64, 1311B): "Ipsum esse nullo modo participat". Aquinas gives this comment: "Praetermisso autem hoc tertio modo participandi, impossibile est quod secundum duos primos modos ipsum esse participat aliquid. Non enim potest participare aliquid per modum quo materia vel subiectum participat formam vel accidens, quia ut dictum est, ipsum esse significatur ut quoddam abstractum. Similiter autem nec potest aliquid participare per modum quo particulare participat universale; sic enim etiam ea quae in abstracto dicuntur, participare aliquid possunt, sicut albedo colorem; sed ipsum esse est communissimum; unde ipsum quidem participatur in aliis, non autem participat aliquid aliud". He adds that a being does participate in being (*esse*) in the second mode of participation, in which a concrete subject participates in an (abstract) form. The third mode (added by St. Thomas) explains how the being of creatures participates in divine being.

[50] I 75, 5 ad 1: "...primus actus est universale principium omnium actuum, quia est infinitum virtualiter, in se omnia praehabens, ut dicit Dionysius, loc.cit. in arg. (*De div.nom.*, c. 5); unde participatur a rebus non sicut pars sed secundum diffusionem processionis ipsius. Potentia autem cum sit receptiva actus, oportet quod actui proportionetur. Actus vero recepti, qui procedunt a primo actu infinito, et sunt quaedam participationes eius, sunt diversi".

[51] Cf. *In VII Metaph.*, l.4, n.1334: "Propter hoc enim omnia alia praedicamenta habent rationem entis a substantia, ideo modus entitatis substantiae, scilicet esse quid, participatur secundum quamdam similitudinem proportionis in omnibus aliis praedicamentis".

For Plato participation belongs to the level of *formal* causality (e.g. beautiful things participate in the Beautiful itself), but St. Thomas points out emphatically that creatures receive their being and their perfection from God as their *efficient cause*. It remains true, however, that what enables us to distinguish this participation, is a datum on the level of formal causality, namely the fact that being and the other transcendental perfections occur in an imperfect manner, realized to a greater or lesser extent: "If different things participate in something in varying ways, this must be attributed from that in which it is found in the most perfect manner, to all things in which it is found in a less perfect manner. For those things which are predicated in a positive manner according to more or less, are predicated in this manner on account of their coming closer or less close to something which is only one (*aliquid unum*): if it were to be attributed to each of these things *per se*, then there would be no reason why it is found more perfect in the one than in the other"[52].

St. Thomas mentions fire as an example and concludes by positing that there is accordingly a being which is most perfect. A limited imperfect act can only exist because its original form exists in all purity[53]. The argumentation coincides with the *Fourth Way* of the *Summa theologiae* through which one arrives at the insight that God exists as the Most Perfect and First Being[54]. The basis of this argument is the principle we have mentioned in Chapter XI: an act is not limited by itself. If it is limited, it is so because it is received in a subject really distinct from it.

In the last analysis the presence of potency and act appears to be the condition for every form of participation and hence St. Thomas can say: "Everything which participates in another is related to that in which it participates as potency to act"[55]. Thus in this limited sense A. Forest is right when he says that Aquinas integrates the doctrine of participation into the Aristotelian vision of reality[56], provided that by "Aristotelian vision" is meant not so much the doctrine of substance and accidents or matter and form, but the doctrine of potency and act as it is developed by St. Thomas on a metaphysical level.

[52] *De potentia*, q.3, a.5.

[53] See Chapter XI where the principle is mentioned that an act is not limited by itself but by a potency which is distinct from it in reality.

[54] See A.L. González, *Ser y participación*, Pamplona 1979.

[55] *SCG* II, c.53: "Omne participans aliquid, comparatur ad hoc quod participatur, ut potentia ad actum; per id enim quod participatur, fit participans actuale".

[56] *La structure métaphysique du concret*², pp.101-151, p.307: "La participation ne trouve sa place dans le thomisme que en tant qu'intégrée à la philosophie aristotélicienne de l'expérience et du réel".

The third mode of participation is frequently called transcendental participation because it refers mainly to the participation of being and transcendental perfections in God. This participation in God's being and perfection may not be thought of as a limitation which excludes God's presence: every limited perfection is only real through the uninterrupted participation in its source, in which it exists in full development. Hence a reference to God is contained in it, which could be called a certain essential impulse towards its own source and a continual proceeding from that source.

Speaking about knowledge and wisdom Maritain once pointed out what he called the law of transgression: a limited knowledge strives as it were, to step beyond its own limitations and to dig continually deeper until it reaches the cause of being[57]. An analogous "going beyond oneself" is given with all transcendental perfections which unfold themselves fully only in God's infinite Being.

However, St. Thomas warns that this connection of created things with God is not one of formal causality. God is not a monistic principle from which things would proceed by spontaneous emanation. Creatures do not possess a "part" of God[58]. Transcendental participation means being caused by another, to which the participated perfection is essentially attributable. Thus this participation ultimately signifies 'being created'[59].

[57] See his *Science et sagesse*, pp.50-52. The idea of this "transgression" goes back to Plotinus. Cf. also Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum cant.* (edit. Langerbeck) 174, 13ff; 180, 5ff.;246, 18; 247, 13ff. However, Aquinas' concept of transgression differs from that of the Neoplatonists.

[58] I 75, 5 ad 1: "Unde (Deus) participatur a rebus non sicut pars, sed secundum diffusionem processionis ipsius".

[59] See I 44, 1: "Si enim aliquid invenitur in aliquo per participationem, necesse est quod causetur in ipso ab eo cui essentialiter convenit"; *ibid.* ad 1: "Ex hoc quod aliquid est ens per participationem, sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio".

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE ORDER OF THINGS

Common being which metaphysics considers is differentiated into various kinds of beings. Is there a particular order of beings? The term *ordo* is borrowed from weaving and indicates a collection of parts or unities which stand in a particular relationship to one another and form a whole. These relationships can be of many kinds: there is local succession, the way in which the parts of a continuous are ordered to one another, temporal succession and sequence of intensity. These kinds of order and succession, however, occur on the level of material being. Is there also a more fundamental order of the various essences?

In its quest for knowledge the intellect seeks order and orders the things it knows. This essential need of the intellect corresponds to the structure of beings: unconnected multiplicity means chance and aimlessness. But this is not what we perceive, since, as Aristotle repeatedly states, we observe everywhere in the world finality and in the vast majority of cases natural things attain their end. The sciences teach that there is a connection between the elements in the periodic system, but also a community of the different forms of energy; biologists tend to accept that the various forms of life are a progressive differentiation and perfection of primitive living beings. Reasoning back from the dependence of all beings on Self-subsistent Being itself, a dependence which will be proved in Part Two, one can show that the universe has a unity of origin and that everything must be ordered towards God and thus forms a unity by order.

Several of the Greek philosophers asserted that there is such an order. Pythagoras is said to have taught the doctrine of the harmony of the spheres[1]: the distances from the planets to the first heaven would correspond to the intervals of the notes in an octave. The almost common conviction that the universe is a marvelously ordered whole, found expression in the use of the word κόσμος to signify the world. This term denotes primarily the order of the universe and its parts, as the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *De mundo* points out. Plato writes that the Demiurge

[1] See Aristoteles, *De caelo* 219 a 8.

[2] *Timaeus* 30 a-b.

invested the universe with the greatest possible amount of order[2]; things are arranged hierarchically. Plato even tried to connect all essences with the One and the Dyad.

According to Aristotle Nature is the cause of the order of all things[3]. The universe is a structured whole of concentric spheres in a gradation of being, stretching out between the self-contemplation of the Unmoved Mover and formless primary matter.

Although the Stoa did not teach that the world is hierarchically ordered, it nonetheless considered the universe an ordered whole comparable to a living being. The world is imperishable although its parts can replace each other[4]. In Neoplatonism the order of the world is conceived as the gradually decreasing radiation of being from a primary source, the One. Proclus developed Plotinus' doctrine of the hypostases; he emphasized the ternary structure of all things as well as the devaluation which occurs with an increase in distance from the One.

The Church Fathers stressed the order of all things, which are made by God's wisdom. St. Basil, for example, attributes this order to God's plan. Hence there is a bond of friendship, community and harmony between all things[5]. Dionysius views God as the principle beyond being of all order which excludes any disproportion between creatures and gives them their own identity[6]. He attempts to describe this order and harmony as it occurs both in the material world and in that of the heavenly spirits[7]; he also sees this order in the Church. Dionysius points out in particular the relationship between the lowest beings in a higher order and the highest beings in a lower order[8].

St. Augustine defines order as "the arrangement which assigns to each of similar and dissimilar things the place which belongs to it"[9]. There is order everywhere[10]. St. Augustine likewise calls attention to the order which God gave to the world: "To some things he gave more being, to others less, and thus he ensured that the essences of things were ordered

[3] *Phys.* 252 a 12.
[4] *SVF* II 527-528.
[5] *Homil. In Hexaem.* II 2.
[6] *Cael.Hier.* 241 C; *De div.nom.* 969 D.
[7] *Eccl.Hier.* 504 CD; *De div.nom.* 969 D.
[8] *De div.nom.* 952A. See R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, Paris 1954, p.37.
[9] *De civitate Dei* XIX 13, 1: "Ordo est parium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca tribuens dispositio".
[10] *De ordine* I, c.6: "Nihil autem esse praeter ordinem video". Cf. II, c.15: In every movement of the stars order dominates.

in degrees"; the higher something is in the order of being, the more it resembles God[11].

According to St. Thomas the good of the universe results from the order of things, just as the good of an army is dependent on its order. We find a dual order in the universe, namely the relationship of the parts to one another and that of the universe to God, who is the end of everything he has made. This order directed to God is most fundamental, whereas that of things to one another is consequent on their being ordained towards God[12].

In Aquinas' view the order of things consists fundamentally in the order of the different species and genera of beings in the world. "The various species of things possess the nature of being in a graded fashion. In the first division of being we encounter immediately being which is perfect, scil. being on itself and being in act and on the other hand imperfect being, namely being in another and being in potency. In the same way it becomes clear for anyone who considers the various things, that one species adds to another some degree of perfection, as animals to plants, and animals which can move locally to animals which are incapable of movement; we observe also that among colours one species is more perfect than another, according to its approaching white"[13]. A formal difference (*differentia secundum formam*) means that the one species has something which the other does not possess or realizes something which the other realizes to a lesser degree. Consequently there is a difference of more and less, and hence Aristotle can say that the species of things are like numbers, which differ specifically because of the fact that each time a unit is added[14]. Man has the highest rank among visible things, as he possesses the ontological contents of inanimate things as well as the perfection of vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual life[15]. This implies that man is the limit and the goal of all visible creatures.

The elements are the first materials of the world order out of which the composite things (*corpora mixta*) are made, which in turn are subservient to living beings. Plants exist for the sake of the animals and animals for the sake of man[16]. Within this major arrangement, however,

[11] *De civ.Dei* XII 2; *De div. quaest.* 83, 51, 2. See B. Benito y Durán, "La ordinación del universo según San Agustín y San Bonaventura", in *Augustinus* 19(1974) 31-47.
[12] *In I Sent.*, d.44, 2c.; *De potentia*, q.7,a.9; *SCG* II 24.
[13] *SCG* II 95; *In II De anima*, l.5, n.288: there are no gaps nor missing links between the species.
[14] *In Librum de causis*, l.4, n.115.
[15] I 91, 1 obi.2.
[16] *SCG* III 22.

a more detailed order and progressing perfection are found: "In the different genera we encounter various species according to the degree of natural perfection which is attained. Among the elements earth is the lowest, fire the most excellent. With regard to minerals we likewise notice that their nature becomes more perfect in stages in the various species until they reach the species gold. Among plants there exists also (progress) up to the species of the most perfect trees, and among animals up to the species man, while some animals are closer to plants, such as the immobile animals which only have the sense of touch, and likewise among plants we find that some are close to lifeless beings"[17].

Even if we would formulate this account of the order of species and genera in a way different from Aquinas, his basic insight retains its validity. In St. Thomas' doctrine things are not merely juxtaposed according to their lesser or greater perfection; it also implies that the perfections and powers on a lower level are integrated in beings on a higher level. In this way chemical elements are more perfect when they are taken up in organisms and become subservient to living beings than when they exist in their own right. A second example is that of certain sense faculties which obtain a higher activity in man than they do in animals[18].

The serial order and progressive perfection which we observe in nature do not show any gaps[19]. This order must be dependent on a single principle: "Wherever there is a difference in degrees, the latter must be seen in terms of their being ordained to some principle which is one. With regard to material substances we ascertain the various degrees, which lead to a difference in species, on account of their order to the first principle which is matter. This explains why the first species are more imperfect, the later ones more perfect: they came into being through addition to the former: just as composite bodies have a more perfect specific essence than the species of the elements, since they contain the elements in themselves and something more as well; hence the relationship of plants to minerals is similar to that of animals to plants"[20]. What St. Thomas wants to say is that since material things have been drawn

[17] *Quaest.disp. de anima*, a.7.

[18] Cf.I-II 74, a ad 1: "Aliquae vires sensitivae partis, etsi sint communes nobis et brutis, tamen in nobis habent aliquam excellentiam ex hoc quod rationi iunguntur". See K. Michalski, in *Angelicum* 14(1937) 212-222.

[19] *In II De anima*, l.5, n.288: "Considerandum est quod ad hoc quod universum sit perfectum nullus gradus perfectionis in rebus intermittitur sed paulatim natura de imperfectis ad perfecta procedit".

[20] *Quaestio disputate de anima*, a.7.

from matter, matter is the principle of reference for examining their perfection. Their different forms are increasingly higher and fuller realizations of what is potentially contained in matter[21].

The substantial form of man (the rational soul) is not drawn from matter, as it surpasses matter by its immateriality. However, it is *in* matter, gives it its form and realizes in it everything which the lower forms possess in the way of essential perfections. Owing to the rational principle of life man is not only man, but also a sensible living being, an organic being, a body, a substance and an existent thing. "Hence the more perfect form brings into being through itself alone everything which the lower forms accomplish through various forms, and even more"[22]. What is found in the things of a lower order exists in a more excellent manner in that which is of a higher order, in greater unity[23].

Man stands on the border between material and immaterial beings, but above man there is the order of spiritual beings, to which Aristotle in *Metaphysica* XII, c. 8 assigned the task of moving the concentric heavenly spheres. However, the human intellect can only suspect rather than prove the existence of these spiritual beings[24]. Aquinas gives the following arguments in favour of their existence: (a) Existing in a body does not belong to a thinking being as such. But what does not belong to some species as such, is not found universally in it. Therefore, there are intellectual beings which are pure spirits. (b) If something imperfect is found in a class of beings, the perfect forms of this class must exist first. (c) The perfection of the universe demands that there be a great variety of intellectual beings[25].

Among these pure spirits there will be an order, dependent on their greater or shorter distance from God. "With regard to immaterial substances, however, the order of the various species is determined not on the basis of a comparison with matter, which they do not possess, but by a comparison with the First Mover, who must be most perfect. And hence the first species among them is more perfect than the second, since it resembles the First Mover more; and the second (species) has less perfection than the first, and so on, to the last species"[26].

As the texts quoted above show there are as it were two poles, towards

[21] I 76, 4 ad 3.

[22] *De spirit.creat.*, a.3.

[23] *Qaestio disp. de anima*, a.18.

[24] *O.c., 3, a.7.*

[25] For the texts see P. Zammit, "De existentia substantiarum intellectualium", *Angelicum* 10(1933) 513-523.

[26] *Quaestio disp. de anima*, a.7.

which things are ordained specifically, namely God and matter. That which is closer to matter is less perfect, that which is closer to God is more perfect[27]. The lowest angel is far above the most highly-endowed human being: "The intellect of an angel surpasses human intelligence more than the intellect of the most excellent philosopher surpasses that of the most illiterate idiot, since the latter distance is within the limits of the human species, which an angel surpasses"[28]. However, there is also approximation: "A higher nature touches in its lowest (species) a lower nature in its highest (species)"[29]. "The rational animal is constituted in this way, that material nature in its highest degree touches the nature of the substances existing in separation (from matter) in its lowest grade"[30]. This axiom is formulated by Dionysius[31] and expresses a widely held conviction of Greek philosophers, in particular of Neoplatonists. It survived for many centuries in Western thought. St. Thomas also refers to the *Liber de causis* as an authority for this theory of the order of things and the continuity of species[32]. According to Aquinas man is the most perfect example of the continuity which obtains between things[33].

When seen from God, the order of created things is a descending ontological series, of which the various species realize God's glory in their own manner on each level, in such a way that the higher things do this spiritually, the lower things in a material manner "so that all gradations of goodness are realized"[34].

In order to indicate that higher beings possess what is found in things on a lower level, St. Thomas uses the terms *continere, praehabere, inesse* in almost all of his works. He also refers to the principle that all things are in all things (*omnia in omnibus*)[35]. The following examples

[27] *De substantiis separatis*, c.6, n.39.
[28] I 108, 2 ad 3; *SCG* I, c.3.
[29] *SCG* II, c.91.
[30] *De spirit.creaturis*, 2.
[31] *De div.nom.*. c.7: "(Sapientia divina) semper coniungens fines priorum principiis secundorum".
[32] *Liber de causis*, prop.19; cf. Aristoteles, *De partibus animalium* 681 a 10. See B. Montagnes "L'axiome de continuité chez saint Thomas", in *Revue des sciences philos. et théol.* 52(1968) 201-221.
[33] *In III Sent.*, prol.. Cf. I 77, 2 and G.Verbeke, "De mens als 'grens' volgens Aquinas", in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 36(1974) 195-231.
[34] I 48, 2. —A. Hayen, *L'intentionnel selon saint Thomas*[2], Bruxelles-Paris 1954, asserts that St. Thomas is speaking of a continuity on the level of efficient causality and that, in the second place, "beings on a lower level, or at least certain among them, are the bearers of a perfection which is beyond them and are essentially characterised by their relation to this higher perfection" (p.203). But what is on a lower level cannot influence that which is higher than itself. It may nevertheless be ordained to what is higher as to its end. There is no passing from the material to the spiritual order.
[35] *Liber de causis*, prop.12.

explain what is meant: the sense of touch contains on its level what the other senses possess in their own way[36]; the *sensus communis* possesses in a higher way what the external senses know. The perceptions of the interior senses are brought together in a higher manner in the *cogitativa*, the sense faculty of judgment. On the level of intellectual knowledge the agent intellect is all future knowledge in a higher manner[37].

All concepts are implicitly contained in the concept of being, as are all judgments in the first principle[38]. In the first principles of both the theoretical and the practical intellect we know everything else[39]. The passions are further determinations of a first movement of the appetite, namely love[40]. The various acts of the will are the progressive confirmation of a first choice and attitude[41]. The virtue of prudence comprizes the other natural virtues in itself, as charity does on the level of grace[42].

As all good actions are a particularization of a good basic choice of the right end, all sins are forms of a wrong self-love[43]. A similar mutual implication is found in causality. The final cause embraces and orders the other causes: the efficient cause gives the form, and matter is contained by the form[44]. Because the universe is not a mass of unconnected things, all causal processes are taken up in a higher unity, namely the so-called universal cosmic causality[45].

Just as all species and genera and the various operations are connected, so too individuals are a complex unity: accidents are not just determinations added at random to a substance but express on the accidental level what is already contained in the substance as a demand or in reality, and they do this in a hierarchical manner: the basic accident is *quantitas*, then comes *qualitas* and relation. By its form a substance is active, due to its matter it is passive. Time and place arise from the fact that a material substance is part of the universe. Hence the categories of being result from and through one another, and the entirety of things is ordered in the most beautiful manner[46].

[36] *In II De anima*, l.19, n.481.
[37] *De veritate*, q.10, a.6: "...quodammodo omnis scientia originaliter indita".
[38] *De veritate*, q.1, a.1.
[39] *Quodl.* VIII, q.2, a.8.
[40] I-II 10, 1.
[41] *De veritate*, q.23, a.1; I-II 10, 1.
[42] I-II 57, 5.
[43] *De malo*, q.8, a.1 ad 9.
[44] *In III Phys.*, lectio 12, n.391; I 76, 5.
[45] *SCG* II 21.
[46] *In III Phys.*, lectio 5, n.322. See our "*Contineri* as a fundamental structure of St. Thomas' ontology", in *Aquinas* 18(1974), pp.97-106. On 'order' in general see B. Coffey,

The medieval doctrine of the hierarchical succession of species survived in later centuries. According to Locke there is a continuous order of gradually ascending species "without chasms or gaps", although owing to the empirical bent of his mind Lock came close to a denial of the reality of the species. "The several species are linked together and differ but in almost insensible degrees[47]. Leibniz points out that nature also abhors the vacuum of forms and that all species are linked together in a great chain of being[48]. While this idea of the continuity between the species persisted, some began to reject the species as being essentially different classes. Buffon even went so far as to assert that the notion of species is artificial: the individuals exhibit an unbroken, continuous series. The static series of immutable species came to be replaced by the idea of a gradual unfolding of forms of life. "One of the principal happenings in eighteenth century thought was the temporalizing of the Chain of Being. The *plenum formarum* came to be conceived by some, not as the inventory but as the program of nature which is carried out gradually"[49]. While Darwin dismissed the species as self-contained and permanent classes of living beings, species have now made a come-back in biology. Modern theorists such as Ernst Mayr go so far as to regard speciation as the introduction of discontinuity into nature. George G. Simpson and others speak of "jumps".

"The Notion of Order according to St. Thomas Aquinas", in *The Modern Schoolman* 27(1949) 1-18; J.M. Ramírez, *De ordine placita quaedam thomistica*, Salamanca 1963.

[47] *Essays Concerning Human Understanding* III 6, 12: "In all the visible corporeal world we see no chasms or gaps". Locke pictures created substances as consisting of numberless species in a continuous series or gradation".

[48] This conviction is recurrent in his *Monadologia* and *Nouveaux Essais*.

[49] See the valuable work of A.O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being. A Study of the History of an Idea*, Cambridge MA 1936.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

SUBSTANCE, THE PRIMARY AND BASIC INSTANCE OF BEING

In unison with Aristotle Aquinas writes that the main task (*principalis intentio*) of metaphysics is the study of substance[1]. Substance is being in the most complete sense of the word. Notwithstanding the importance of substance we begin its study only at this point because substance (like the accidents) delimits being (*ens*) and contracts it to certain specific essences[2], whereas the theory of the transcendental concepts, the study of being and essence as well as that of participation concern being in its full extent. For this reason substance is not the only mode of access to being[3].

The meaning of the term 'substance' according to Aristotle

The term substance as it is used in our Western languages can either have the typically philosophical meaning of the scholastic *substantia*, or refer to the material out of which something is made; finally it can also denote wealth, property or the essential part of something. In this study the term is used in its scholastic sense. However, we should note that even a philosopher like St. Thomas uses the term in various senses.

Originally the Latin word *essentia* expressed what we understand by substance. This latter term was still unknown to Cicero, and was probably formed by Seneca as a translation of ὑπόστασις and had the meaning of reality[4]. Quintilian uses *substantia* in the sense of the real content of a speech or 'chief element'[5]. The term also denoted a class in the doctrine of the rhetorical στάσις[6] and according to Arpe this was the reason that it was associated with the ten categories. Marius Victorinus and St. Augustine use the word as the translation of οὐσία in its sense

[1] *In VII Metaph.*, l.2, n.1270.

[2] I 5, 3 ad 1: "...contrahunt ens".

[3] We want to stress this point against B. Welte's view expressed in his "Ens per se subsistens. Bemerkungen zum Seinsbegriff des Thomas von Aquin", *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 71(1963-1964) 243-252.

[4] *Epist.* 113, 4; 87, 40; *Dial.* 7, 7, 4.

[5] Quintilianus III 6, 39-40. *Substantia* is opposed to *qualitas*.

[6] *Inst.orat.* II 21, 3.

of the first category of being (although the latter has also *essentia* as a translation of this term[7]). In his *Commentary on the Categories* Boethius chooses *substantia* to translate οὐσία[8], but in another text he writes that *substantia* is the translation of ὑπόστασις (the individual substance) and that οὐσία signifies essence (*essentia*)[9].

In Plato's dialogues οὐσία has the sense of a) property or wealth; b) a thing which is real and exists independently of the perceiver; c) the essence, the formal aspect of things; d) the being of the world of Ideas; e) the actual existence and reality as expressed by the copula 'to be'; f) the three levels of being (the unchangeable Ideas, intermediate realities such as the soul, sensible things such as the celestial bodies)[10].

Aristotle writes that the question of the meaning of οὐσία is the question of the nature of being and so it is the central issue of philosophy[11]. *Ousia* is the primary and fundamental reality. Everything is based on it[12]. In keeping with his doctrine of the analogy of being ('being is used in different meanings': τὸ ὄν πολλαχῶς λέγεται) Aristotle writes that "some things are called beings because they are substances, others because they are determinations of substance, and again others because they lead to the coming-into-being of substance..."[13].

This division of Aristotle refers to his account of the categories of being. This doctrine was accepted by St. Thomas who gave it a metaphysical foundation. However, many modern philosophers reject it. According to Kant Aristotle would just have "grabbed together" a "bunch" of different types of predicates[14]. We shall come back to this question in the following chapter.

Even if, from an etymological point of view, the term *ousia* has a more abstract meaning, for Aristotle it signifies in the first place the individual being, this existing thing (sometimes its formal principle) and also this quiddity (τόδε τι). The genus and the species, insofar as they are general, are not *ousia*[15]. By "first *ousia*" Aristotle means the last, i.e. the most

[7] See Curt Arpe, "Substantia", in *Philologus* 94(1940) 65ff.
[8] *PL* 64, 182.
[9] *Liber de duabus naturis et una persona* (*PL* 64, 1344).
[10] *Tim.* 35a. See H. Berger, *OUSIA in de dialogen van Plato*, Leiden 1961.
[11] *Metaph.* 1028 b2-4.
[12] *Ibid.* 1003 b 16-19.
[13] *Ibid.* 1003 b 6ff.
[14] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. "Transz.Logik", I, Abh.1, I,3.
[15] *Categ.* 3 b 10. See also A. Graeser, "Aristoteles und das Problem von Substantialität und Sein", in *Freiburger Zeitschr. f. Philos.u.Theol.* 25(1978), 120; D.M. Mackinnon, "Aristotle's Conception of Substance", in *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, London 1965, p.109; E. Vollrath, "Aristoteles: das Problem der Substanz", in J. Speck (edit.), *Grundprobleme der großen Philosophen*, Göttingen 1972, 84-128.

fundamental subject, of which other things are predicated but which itself is never predicated of anything else. "Second substance", on the other hand, means the essence which is predicated of the individual, e.g. "human being" in "Peter is a human being". The second substance itself can also be the subject of a predicate ("man can laugh")[16]. The first substance is substance in the proper sense of the word and has the following properties: it is not in a subject, but is a subject of which species and genus are predicated; the term means a particular individual thing which exists *per se* (καθ' αὑτό)[17]; substance is of a higher order than the contrary qualities; substance has no gradation in the sense of being more or less real[18]. The properties mentioned refer both to the logical as well as to the metaphysical order.

Ousia is used in various senses. But for Aristotle the fundamental meaning is that of deepest source and centre of reality (αἴτιον πρῶτον τοῦ εἶναι)[19]. Although Aristotle does indicate that the deepest nature and reality of the individual being lies in its existence, he does not develop this position further. By making this existing thing the centre of reality, Aristotle reacted against Plato's theory of the Ideas, in which the reality of the world loses its vigor and true being belongs only to the Ideas. However, Aristotle does point out that with the study of substance we are leaving behind us the realm of what is perceptible by the senses and are dealing with a metaphysical aspect of reality[20].

Notwithstanding its high value Aristotle's theory of substance is not without certain limitations: the individual is excluded from scientific knowledge; substances exist on themselves in the cosmos; their presence is not explained metaphysically; the τόδε τι, this particular thing, is also predicated of the form, with the result that it is not always clear what is the real bearer of being[21].

[16] *Categ.* 2 a 11-15. As St. Thomas explains, the division into first and second substance is an analogous division (*De potentia*, q.9, a.2 ad 6). First substance, scil. the existing thing, is substance in the plenary sense of the word; it is being without more (*ens simpliciter*). Cf. III, 5 ad 3. Being (*esse*) belongs to its concept: "Esse est de ratione substantiae". See also *In II Sent.*, d.3, q.1, a.1 ad 1: "cuius proprie est subsistere"; *In X Metaph.*, l.3, n.1979. As Aristotle had done, Aquinas uses the term also to denote the nature (specific being) which exists. Thus he even speaks of a real distinction between substance and being. See *SCG* II, c.52: "Nullius igitur substantiae creatae suum esse est sua substantia".
[17] *Anal.Post.*73 b 5-10.
[18] *Categ.* 3a-4a.
[19] *Metaph.* 1041 b 28.
[20] For a recent study of the role of substance in becoming see M.L. Gill, *Aristotle on Substance*, Princeton N.J. 1989.
[21] See R. Jolivet, *La notion de substance. Essai historique et critique sur le développement des doctrines d'Aristote à nos jours*, Paris 1929, p.36.

Substance in the later history of philosophy

The philosophers of the Stoa tend to disregard the fact that substance is that which exists *per se*, and stress that the subject is the bearer of various qualities. Boethius directs his attention mainly to the logical aspect of substance, namely that it exists *per se* and not in a subject[22], but he emphasizes also that substance is the bearer of accidents[23]. He calls matter, form and the whole made out of the three substances[24].

In the Latin West the works of Avicenna and Averroes were used to facilitate the study of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. We recall that Avicenna's approach to the study of substance is ontological; he emphasizes that being is divided into substantial and accidental being[25]. Substance exists *per se* and not in something else. Averroes, for his part, renders Aristotle's doctrine of substance faithfully.

St. Thomas made a careful analysis of Aristotle's doctrine to conclude that the study of substance constitutes the central issue of metaphysics[26]. He divides substance into sensible substances and immaterial substances and emphasizes the difference in the *substantia sensibilis* between the concrete thing and its essence (*quod quid est*): the concrete thing *has* a specific essential form, but is not identical with it[27].

Aquinas, however, rejects Avicenna's definition of substance as *ens per se*, since the latter views being (*ens*) as a genus which can be divided into being in itself and being in another, for being is not a genus and substance is being in the proper sense of the term[28]. Furthermore, God would also be a substance, if with Avicenna we define substance as *ens per se*. Substance means an essential form to which being by itself (*esse per se*) is attributed. However, it is not its being, whereas God is his being[29]. Moreover, God is not a bearer of determinations, as is substance[30]. However, if we use the term in a more general sense meaning by it "existing *per se*", it can also be applied to God[31].

Substance is the basic reality, viz. the subject which exists, but there

[22] *In Categ.Arist.: PL* 64, 182.
[23] *Liber de duabus naturis et una persona: PL* 64, 1344.
[24] *In Categ.Arist.: PL* 64, 184.
[25] *Le livre de science* I, 94 (trad. M.Achen et H.Massé), Paris 1955.
[26] *In VII Metaph.*, l.2, n.1270.
[27] *Ibid.*, l.11, n.1535.
[28] *In I Sent.*, d.8, q.4, a.2. Cf. *In II Sent.*, d.35, q.1, a.2 ad 1: "(Substantia) perfecte rationem entis habet".
[29] I 3, 5 ad 1.
[30] *In I Sent.*, d.8, q.4, a.2.
[31] *De potentia*, q.1, a.1.

are additional determinations which exist in and through substance. This is the reason why these accidents can only be known through substance. Substance is in the first place the being *per se*; its second property is to be the bearer of accidents. Substance is not part of something else, but is itself the undivided being.

The study of substance belongs to metaphysics. It is possible to distinguish in being a progressive realization of content and reality: if we start from that which is furthest removed from the totally real, the *ens rationis* which has no existence in reality comes first; being in potency which can be brought to reality in a process of becoming is second; next comes accidental being which does not exist *per se*, but in another; the highest degree of being is that of the thing which exists *per se* (*habet esse firmum et solidum quasi per se existens*)[32]. Substance is the first of all beings[33] and is "straightforward being and being *per se*"[34]. Substance exists, as it were, through itself (*quasi per se subsistens*) and is distinct from everything else; a substance is in the strict sense of the word one thing[35]; being a substance is not communicable to others[36].

A substance precedes its accidents ontologically. It also precedes them in the order of definition (since accidents cannot be defined without reference to the substance), and finally also in the order of knowledge: we know something only when we know its substance. St. Thomas sums up: "The term substance means not only the genus of being *per se*, as was shown above, but also the essence to which it pertains to be thus, i.e. to be *per se*; this being *per se* however, is not its essence"[37]. For St. Thomas being *per se* is the heart of substance and the secret of its incommunicability. Hence he attributes a greater value to the knowledge of existing individual things than Aristotle had done: "Knowing individual things belongs to our perfection"[38]. He also writes that our initial abstract knowledge must finally return to the individuals existing in reality.

Later scholastics tended to neglect the insight that substance is being *per se*. Scotus considers substance as a part within the still larger genus of being and thus in a sense he detaches substance from being[39].

[32] *In IV Metaph.*, l.1, nn.540-543.
[33] *In VII Metaph.*, l.1, n.1248.
[34] *Ibidem.*
[35] *In IX Metaph.*, l.10, n.903.
[36] *In V Metaph.*, l.10, n.903.
[37] I 3, 5 ad 1: "Substantia nomen non significat hoc solum quod est per se esse, quia hoc quod est esse, non potest per se esse genus ut ostensum est in corp.art., sed significat essentiam cui competit sic esse, id est per se esse, quod tamen non est ipsa essentia eius".
[38] I 14, 11.
[39] See E. Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot*, p.203.

According to Scotus we must attribute entity to every general form. Since there are various forms within a substance (e.g. in Peter there is corporeity, vegetative life, sensitive life, being man), substance is for him a collection of forms rather than a being with a strict unity. Scotus also thinks that we possess no concept of substance which expresses its essence. From our experience we only know accidents immediately, and on the basis of this knowledge we form the common concept of being, with the aid of which we then express substance[40]. Scotus, therefore, considers substance as a subdivision or sector of being. As M.-D. Philippe notes, the absence of the doctrine of the analogy of being prevented Scotus from conceiving substance as being *par excellence*[41] and so he prepared the way for nominalism. In sharp contrast to Scotus' theory of the reality of the universal forms within the concrete thing, Ockham and other nominalists asserted that only what is individual is known. The individual being is the only reality. A metaphysical reflection is superfluous and impossible[42].

The fourteenth century philosopher Nicholas of Autrecourt denied the possibility of knowing substances (except for one's own soul): only attributes can be known by us[43]. We have no experience of substances; arguments in favour of their existence do not produce any certainty because they are not reducible to the first principle; God can miraculously allow accidents to exist without their substances; finally, we are not even sure that material substances exist (except perhaps our own body) and less still that God exists[44].

Suarez defined substance as *ens per se* which is or can be the bearer of accidents[45]. He places the treatment of substance after the division of being into uncreated and created being. Nevertheless he also states that accidents are beings by their own beingness, because they have their own being[46]. Matter has also beingness of its own; moreover, it attaches itself to the form. In this vision (composite) substances can no longer have the intrinsic unity which they possess according to St. Thomas[47]. For Suarez

[40] *Ordinatio* I, dist.3, pars 1, q.3 (*Opera omnia*, III, p.86;90).
[41] *L'être. Recherche d'une philosophie première*, I, Paris 1972, p.293, n.304.
[42] See his *Summa logicae*, I, c.43.
[43] See Jolivet, *o.c.*, pp.86-90.
[44] See L.A. Kennedy, "Philosophical Scepticism in England in the Mid-Fourteenth Century", in *Vivarium* XXI(1983) 35-58, p.39. Cf. J. Lappe, *Nicolaus von Autrecourt. BGPhMA*, VI, Münster 1908, 12-13.
[45] *Disp.metaph.*, disp.32, sectio 4, n.16.
[46] *Ibid.*, sectio 2, n.14.
[47] *Ibid.*, disp.4, sectio 4, n.16.

substance does not have that metaphysical fullness of being which it has for Aquinas.

Descartes inherited the concept of substance from late scholasticism: "We do not conceive substance otherwise than as a thing which exists in such a way that it only needs itself in order to exist"[48]. The existence of the thing, which Descartes calls substance, is known by a so-called clear and distinct idea. Moreover, he identifies substance with its attributes. Thus the distinction between substance and accidents disappears. Since substance does not change, there is no longer any substantial change or finality. Substance stands alone on itself "without the aid of another substance"[49]. Descartes attributes essential characteristics to substance which determine its species on the various levels of reality, namely thought, extension and infinity[50]. Infinite substance, God, is autonomous in the full sense of the word.

Spinoza defines substance as that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e. the thing of which the concept does not require the concept of something else from which it would be deduced[51]. He added this second part of his definition in view of what he calls the *modi* which he introduces as a substitute for accidents. These *modi* are to the only substance, God, as an individual essence is related to its genus. In this way substance is a whole, which embraces the apparent multiplicity of our universe, but which is not dependent on the *modi* which determine it so that it can be conceived. Substance is one, unique and general and is the cause of itself. Apart from this substance (God) there can be no other substance[52]. Spinoza's theory of substance exercised a pervading influence on German idealism, since it was instrumental in a change of meaning of the term substance which now came to signify being in general instead of this individual thing.

John Locke does not deny the existence of substance as a subject which is the bearer of properties, but asserts that we cannot know it. "The mind being, as I have declared, furnished with a great number of the simple ideas, conveyed in by the senses, as they are found in exterior things, or by reflection on its own operations, takes notice also, that a certain number of these simple ideas go constantly together;... Because, as I have said, not imagining how these simple Ideas can subsist by

[48] *Principia philosophiae*, I, n.51.
[49] See E. Gilson, *René Descartes. Discours de la méthode*, p.304.
[50] *Oeuvres* IX (Tannery et Adam), p.175.
[51] *Ethica* I 3.
[52] *Ibid.*, I 14.

themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some Substratum, wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result, which therefore we call substance... The idea then we have, to which we give the general name substance, being nothing, but the supposed, but unknown support of those qualities, we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist, *sine re substante*, without something to support them, we call that support substance"[53].

While Locke is still willing to concede that there must be something like substance in order to bring together and bear the various attributes which we perceive, David Hume rejects this substrate and accepts only "a collection and succession in time of qualities perceptible to the senses". The idea of a substance as well as that of a mode, is nothing but "a collection of simple ideas, that we united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned them, by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or others, that collection"[54]. Hume argues that we must give up this fiction.

Hume's criticism of the classical theory of substance awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumber and so it was the direct occasion of the latter's idealist critique of the concept of substance. According to Kant this idea is an apriori subjective form of the human intellect which precedes all experience. This apriori category serves the purpose of indicating that a phenomenon continues to exist in time. The apriori form of thought 'substance' belongs to the group of relative apriori forms or categories[55] In idealism after Kant substance becomes either the ego itself which embraces all reality and can be everything (Fichte) or the Absolute, which at the same time is the subject of accidents (Hegel).

Idealism as well as the critique of substance by the empiricists were instrumental in banishing substance from modern philosophy. The rejection of substance, or at least the doubt projected on the objectivity of our concept, has marked contemporary philosophical, physical and psychological theories. Some modern thinkers make substance into a mysterious background of phenomena; others, such as B. Russell, reject substance as it is a totally useless inert mass behind phenomena. Instead of accepting permanent substances as bearers of reality, some are inclined to see reality as a network of relations constituted by a basic activity. Their view subscribes to materialistic monism. According to

[53] *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, c.23, 1 and 2.
[54] *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Section VI (Of Modes andf Substances).
[55] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Transz.Logik, 2, Buch 2,3, 3A.

analytical philosophy the term substance is a projection of linguistic structures. The distinction between substances and accidents is explained as the transposition of the structure of a sentence (subject - predicate). Wittgenstein believes that the world is made up of facts, not of substances[56]. J.-P. Sartre writes that the progress of modern thought consists in the fact that the distinction between a concealed centre of being and the outward appearance has been dropped and that beings are now reduced to the form of their appearance[57]: if we reject the illusion of the hidden ground of things, their being becomes their appearance[58].

Leibniz is one of the few philosophers in the modern period who hold on to the doctrine of substance. He writes that the concept of substance is not as obscure as many seem to think[59]. The monads are the real substances, while physical bodies, which in Leibniz's view constitute aggregates of monads, are derived substances and should be called *substantiata*[60]. Especially in organic beings the monads are bound together by the *vinculum substantiale* (an active and passive force). — Contrary to what other existentialist authors do, Heidegger places *ousia* in the centre of his philosophical research, but he understands it as *Seiendheit*[61]: it is not being itself, but the becoming present of being. Being itself remains largely concealed.

Modern physics rejects the concept of substance insofar as it intends to study only phenomena, that is measurable manifestations of nature. However, since scientific thought follows a different approach and moves on a level which is not that of the realist philosophy of being[62], the conclusions reached in physics do not imply at all that common sense and metaphysicians mistakenly accept the reality of substance.

We would like to point out that part of the criticism mentioned above results from a misunderstanding of the nature of substance. Substance is not a superfluous substrate: it is the source from which the accidents

[56] *Tractatus* 1-2.
[57] *L'être et le néant*, p.11.
[58] *O.c.*, p.12.
[59] *Nouveaux Essais*, II, c.12, paragr.6.
[60] *Lettre à Des Bosses. Werke* (Gerhardt) II, p.250.
[61] Heidegger sees a duality in being (*ens ut nomen* and *ens ut participium*), which he calls the ontological difference (*Vom Wesen des Grundes*, Frankfurt a.M. 1949, p.15 and *passim*). By *Seiendheit* he probably means the whole of existing things, but also their "ground" (which is sometimes thought of as divine: *Zur Seinsfrage*, Frankfurt 1956, p.18). But Heidegger refuses to identify Being, as he conceives it, with God.
[62] Modern science is mainly concerned with the quantitative aspects of nature, which it expresses in mathematical formulae; it seeks to understand nature within the framework of this vision. The result is that an ontological approach is bound to be meaningless because it is outside this field.

result; it is the reality of things themselves, viz. it is this thing, this living being, this human being. Substance is the subject which performs all actions; it is also the goal of all processes. Accidents express in space and in time what is contained in the substance.

The reality of substance

How can can one show that this source and ground of the reality of individual things is not a postulate, but really exists? A first indication that substances exist is found in linguistic usage. Assuming that language is an expression of our encounter with reality, we reflect on the distinction between the subject of a sentence and the verb, the predicate and the direct and indirect object. If the subject is a noun (or a personal pronoun) we are dealing with a thing which is the bearer of a number of properties and which belongs to a particular class of beings. In this way we develop the doctrine of the categories and we discover the concept of the subject which we call substance.

In a more ontological manner the existence of substance can be shown by the following proofs which depend on perception and make use of induction: we see a new living being come into existence, grow, change its shape, develop activities which it did not have at first, ensure its own continued existence, in short show a very complex whole of properties and activities. These activities exist because of this subsistent whole, manifestly proceed from it and are animated by this one subject. We call this subject and permanent centre substance. If there would not be such a subject, the various activities could never remain together in harmony directed towards the whole.

We have access also to the concept of substance from our experience of ourselves and our fellowmen: we are conscious that underneath our acts there is an "I" and underneath those of others a "you". This "I" is our centre and the foundation of our reality and our unity. In analogy to this experience we conclude that other people and living beings are also substances. We can even extend this conclusion to lifeless things which display particular, fixed properties and constitute a separate whole, e.g. a stone or a piece of glass: these things possess particular properties which can change within certain limits while they remain the same thing and continue to exist[63]. We must note, however, that substances as such

[63] Metaphysics does not examine the difficult question to what extent such material things as drops of water, grains of sand, layers of stone are each different substances.

are not accessible to sense-perception, although in a sense they are experienced together with their accidents which we know through our senses[64]. What is most proper to substance, viz. being a subject which exists on its own and possesses itself, is not directly knowable to the senses.

The above arguments belong to the philosophy of nature. Further metaphysical reflection is possible which forces us to admit the reality of substances: it is evident that beings and "the world" exist. Their existence can be either subsisting *per se* or it rests upon and is borne by another. The first mode of being we call substance, the second accidental existence. However, it is clear that not all things can belong to the second category. Hence substance exists. If one refuses to accept this division into two ways of being, one encounters the insuperable difficulty that sometimes things remain the same while some of their attributes change. Moreover, in that case one can no longer explain why there is never "energy on itself" or "colours on themselves", but always energy or colours which are tied to particular things or structures.

The following objection to the concept of substance is sometimes raised: subsisting *per se*, which is said to be proper to substance, has no value or meaning in the natural sciences; according to the latter all things are related to one another and exist as a system of relations. The answer to this difficulty is quite simple: it is indeed true that some aspects of physical things display the character of existing as a relationship with other things. An example is energy. However, from an ontological viewpoint there must be subsistent subjects to which the above mentioned relations belong. However, it is true that the term subsistence has no meaning in physics.

Heidegger proposes to define substance with the aid of the category of *Zuhande sein* and Merleau-Ponty reduces it to "being there for man". This existentialist approach, however, does not abolish the ontological and basic structure of substances. Being precedes the order of knowledge, and things are in themselves and for themselves before they exist for man.

Forming the concept of substance

From what has been said above it is clear that we do not arrive at the concept of substance through "imagination" or by means of a presuppo-

[64] *In II Sent.*, d.39, q.1, a.3: "Nulla substantia est per se sensibilis".

sition, but with the aid of induction and abstraction: from what we experience concretely through the senses we draw the concept of a permanent subject, a concept which is conveyed to us together with its (accidental) properties which the senses perceive. Our senses do not immediately know substance, i.e. the subject which possesses attributes and performs actions. They know it only as something conveyed to them concomitantly (*per accidens*)[65]: substance is given together with the colour and surface which we see. This does not mean that our intellect *adds* the concept of substance to the sense data, for the substance is implicitly contained in the latter, namely in what the faculty of sight or the sense of touch perceives. However, in its very essence, viz. as that which subsists through itself and not in something else, substance is only known by the intellect.

Substance, essence and subsistence

The substance is this formal content and this thing. Hence Aristotle calls substance τὸ μέν τι ἐστι καὶ τόδε τι[66], an expression which St. Thomas understands as meaning "the essence of the substance and the subsisting thing"[67]. That a substance exists *per se* does not mean that in the order of being it is not dependent on God. By "subsistent existence" we mean the actual independence of other natural things in exercising its existence but not necessarily an independence in origin or an immunity from any influence on the accidental level. Descartes' definition "by substance we can understand nothing else but a thing which exists in such a way that it needs nothing else in order to exist"[68], is formally untenable since it leaves no space for the dependence on God which is proper to all participated being.

We argued above that substance is this essence which exists in itself and is the bearer of accidental properties. The (general) essence, e.g. "man", does not exist in its universality, but only in the individuals of its species. The specific form is received each time in such a way by primary matter that it becomes an individual, particular form: the matter from which it is drawn, is a substrate singled off from other beings, insofar as it is determined by quantity and other accidental determinations

[65] I 17, 2.
[66] *Metaph.* 1028 a 11.
[67] *In VII Metaph.*, lectio 1, n.1247.
[68] *Principia philosophiae*, I, n.51. When we consider the entire passus, it becomes obvious that Descartes did not intend to exclude that created substances ontologically depend on God.

of the preceding being to receive precisely this individual form. The individual beings in the material world belong to some species, whereas each of the spiritual substances is a species of it own and possesses uniqueness in a higher manner. The individual is the first reality which we reach through sense knowledge; our judgements are based on its perception. However, since the individual depends on matter, it is not adequately knowable to our intellect.

A substance is an individual whole existing *per se* and belonging to a particular species. The most formal aspect of a substance is its being through itself (*esse per se*). This being through itself is expressed by the latin term *subsistentia*, which was used by Boethius in his *Praedicamenta* to translate the Greek οὐσίωσις, but in the Middle Ages the term became the current translation for ὑπόστασις[69]. The term *hypostasis* has a long and complex history. In classical Greek it meant first the ground to stand on, structure, situation, sedimentation (in Aristotle and in medical literature). Around the beginning of the Christian era the term came to denote reality, realization and existence. In Stoic literature it meant the reality of existing things, but not that which is accidental nor things of reason (*entia rationis*)[70]. *Hypostasis* is that which exists as the foundation of being; it is the basis of accidental being and makes coming into being possible. In Neoplatonism the term refers to the externalization of the One, the principle of all things. In this general sense there are many 'hypostases', but only three which are subsistent and are not received in matter, namely νοῦς, ψυχή and the individual soul.

This term, which came to occupy such an important position in philosophical language, entered theology as well. Initially the Fathers refused to use of the term in order to refer to the Mystery of the three Divine Persons, as these are not separate realities and also are not graded ontologically as are the hypostases in Neoplatonism. St. Athanasius, however, having initially rejected the term, later began to use it, modifying its meaning in order to make it more suitable to express the being of the divine Persons.

Thus *hypostasis* (and its Latin equivalent *subsistentia*) began to express the manner of existence of substance, which is in itself and of itself and remains on itself. "Returning to its own essence is nothing else

[69] Cf. St. Thomas, III 2, 3: "Subsistentia idem est quod res subsistens, quod est proprium hypostasis".
[70] See H. Dörrie, "ΥΠΟΣΤΑΣΙΣ. Wort und Bedeutungsgeschichte, *Sitzungsber. der bay.Akd.d.Wissensch.*, phil.-hist.Kl., 1955, p.58.

than that the thing exists in itself"[71]. Each material substance is a compound containing matter and form. What exists is this whole. The act of being does not belong to the separate components but to the whole. If the compound is dissolved, being also ceases. Being is not added as an accident, but belongs to the order of substance.

In immaterial things there is no composition of matter and form, but the substance which exists is its own nature[72]. Logically, but not ontologically, we distinguish between the specific content of the nature of these spiritual beings on the one hand and the subjects which exist and act on the other; nature and subject together form a unity[73]. In these immaterial beings, the *esse* pertains to this subject, which is also its own essence. The connection between essence and being cannot be severed; the essence has no components which could fall apart[74].

At this juncture mention should be made of an interesting instance of the influence of theology on philosophical thought. The mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God confronts the Christian philosopher with a problem: in Christ this individual human nature is possessed by and taken up in the Divine Person of the Son, since the "I" which speaks in Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God. If, however, this human nature of Christ would also be a human person as is the case with every other individual human nature, there would be a duality of persons in Christ, an interpretation which was put forward by Nestorius but rejected by the orthodox faith. There is no human person in Jesus, although he certainly has an individual human nature. This dogma of the faith confronts the Christian philosopher with the question as to what really constitutes being a person. Manifestly it is something positive, scil. possessing and exercising existence as well as being an acting subject. The contents of Revelation suggest to suppose that 'being a person' and possessing subsistent existence are added to the individual essence, so that this individual essence becomes a subject which exists *per se* and exercises existence as its basic activity. Accordingly, 'being a subject' (subsistence) adds nothing to the individual essence in the line of its contents, but is only the subsistent exercise of existence and being a subject in this individual essence. St. Thomas expresses this conclusion

[71] I 14, 2 ad 1. Cf. *In Librum de causis*, prop. 15 where Thomas writes: "Illa enim dicuntur secundum substantiam ad seipsa converti quae subsistunt per seipsa, habentia fixionem ita quod non convertantur ad aliquid aliud sustentans ipsa, sicut est conversio accidentium ad subiecta"; *De potentia*, q.9, a.1: "...dicitur subsistere quasi per se et non in alio existens".

[72] *De potentia*, q.9, a.1.

[73] *Quodl.* II, q.2, a.2.

[74] I 75, 6.

in these terms: "Being is consequent to nature not as to something which possesses being, but as to something through which something is; it is consequent to the person or the *hypostasis* as to something which possesses being"[75]. "Being pertains to the very constitution of the person, and thus in this respect it has the nature of a termination"[76].

On the basis of this and similar texts Cajetan called subsistence the ultimate termination and completion of the substance, which makes it a subsistent subject. John of St. Thomas speaks of a *modus substantialis*, i.e. a modal perfection which makes the individual essence into something which exists as a subject[77]. According to this interpretation, there is a so-called modal distinction between subsistence and the individual nature, i.e. a distinction in which subsistence is the termination and inner perfection of the essence. The individual nature is perfected in this sense that it comes to exist by itself, "possesses" being of its own and is not other things (the incommunicability of the individual substance). Precisely because of subsistence, the act of being is not just any kind of addition which realizes the individual essence, but it (*esse*) is "possessed" and "exercised" interiorly by the nature which has become its subject[78].

Other Thomists prefer to identify subsistence with the act of being (*esse*) and point to the text quoted in footnote 76. What is correct in this view is the fact that being must be intrinsic to subsistence, since the latter is the possession and exercise of existence. But against this view we note that it is this individual nature which exists and that to this extent subsistence must embrace the whole of that which exists. The identification of subsistence and being would mean a rejection of the Thomist doctrine that being can only be limited by a potency really distinct from being.

Boethius' definition of the *suppositum (naturae completae individua substantia)* must accordingly be understood in the sense that it refers to the individual nature which exists *per se* and possesses itself. The account we have given considers 'being a person' as that which possesses and exercises being (in rational things) in an entirely unique and incommunicable manner. This view is more profound than that of some

[75] III 17, 2 ad 1: "...esse consequitur naturam non sicut habentem esse, sed sicut qua aliquid est; personam autem, sive hypostasim consequitur sicut habentem esse".

[76] III 19, 1 ad 4: "...esse pertinet ad ipsam constitutionem personae et sic quantum ad hoc se habet in ratione termini".

[77] See Cajetanus, *De ente et essentia*, q.12 (edit.Marietti, p.154); Joannes a Sancto Thoma, *Cursus theologicus*, III, q.3, disput.6, a.1, n.9ff.

[78] See J. Maritain, "Sur la notion de subsistance", *Revue thomiste* 54(1954) 242-250.

modern thinkers who place 'being a person' in man's self-consciousness. "Being a person' is primarily the possession and exercise of being as a free, thinking man. Thus 'being a person' is possessing oneself in a most profound, unique and incommunicable way. Moreover, it also becomes conscious self-possession. The person is the ultimate and deepest core of man, sc. that through which man is most an image of God (*imago Dei*): since he possesses being, man can also know and love[79].

In addition to these considerations about the ontological and the psychological sense of the concept 'person', one can speak also of a person as the subject of duties and rights, insofar as the person seeks to attain by nature those values which are his most important goods[80].

[79] I 29, 3: "...persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura". As a person man is *capax Dei* (III 4, 1 ad 2). See also E. Mounier, *Personnalisme et christianisme. Oeuvres*, I, p.764.

[80] See Y. Floucat, in *Revue thomiste* 86(1986), p.209.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ACCIDENTAL BEING

The beings which we perceive are substances possessing certain properties. Some of these properties appear not to be essential since they can change while the subject to which they belong remains. Apparently they are properties or determinations which are not the thing itself but are attributed to it. This attribution is expressed in Latin with the aid of the verb *accidere*, from which the term accident is derived on the analogy of the Greek τό συμβεβηκός. There are indeed determinations in things, which never exist through themselves, but only as attributes of something else: a size is always the size of something, a colour can only exist as an attribute of a subject, etc. Hence accidents always refer to the substance to which they are attributed; in their definition substance is mentioned as their subject of inherence[1].

The things which surround us and act as well as we ourselves exist as beings through themselves. In other words they are substances and therefore strictly speaking only substances exist. Accidents are determinations within this reality: "We speak of being (*ens*) as that which has being (*esse*). However, only a substance which exists *per se*, is such. Accidents are called beings (*entia*) not because they are, but rather because through them something is; just as we say that whiteness exists because its sublect is white. Hence he (sc. Aristotle) says that accidents are not simply called beings, but "beings of being" (*entis entia*), such as quality and change"[2].

The substance and its accidents

If we try to determine more closely the relationship of substance to its accidents, the following facts must serve as a guide: substance is simply the existing thing which possesses a fundamental perfection and forms

[1] *In VII Metaph.*, lectio 1, n.1258: "In definitione cuiuslibet accidentium oportet ponere definitionem substantiae".

[2] *In XII Metaph.*, l.1, n.2419: "Ens dicitur quasi esse habens. Hoc autem solum est substantia quae subsistit. Accidentia autem dicuntur entia non quia sunt sed quia magis ipsis aliquid est; sicut albedo dicitur esse, quia eius subiectum est album. Ideo dicit quod non simpliciter dicuntur entia sed 'entis entia', sicut qualitas et motus".

a whole which is complete[3]. Accidents leave this whole intact, for they are supplementary determinations of it; together with the substance they do not constitute a new subsistent whole, but an accidental unity. Like every ontological composition this accidental unity must consist in a relationship of act to potency[4]. The relationship of a substance to its accidents is characterized by mutual influence or determination, i.e. it is a causal relationship according to the various genera of causality. A substance is determined by accidents and to this extent it is the material cause in which the accidents come into being. The substance, however, is not the matter *out of* which accidents result, because a substance does not become its accidents but is only accidentally determined by them[5]. Accidents exercise formal causality with regard to substance, while substance exercises a kind of efficient causality, to the extent that it sustains the accidents and causes them to be. The accidents, moreover, exist for the sake of the substance, the content of which they develop on the accidental level (cf. infra). Thus substance is the final cause of the accidents, even if at the same time it is itself ordained towards its (accidental) actions, for activity is the perfection of being. The relationship of a substance to its accidents illustrates the axiom that causes are causes of one another. From their dependence on the substance it becomes clear that we have to define accidents as "things to which it pertains to be in another"[6]. If we say that a substance is to its accidents as potency to act, this does not mean that we have to do with an exception to the rule that act and potency must be on the same level of being. It is true that substance belongs to an entirely different order from that of accidental being. However, the reply to this difficulty is that the accidents determine the substance precisely to the extent that the latter tends to be spatially extended, qualitatively determined etc. in an accidental manner. As was indicated, an accident is not a subsistent being but a being in another: "Every accident is called a being, not that it possesses being itself, but because something is through it. Hence it is predicated of a being rather than that it is itself a being, as is said in the seventh book of the *Metaphysics*; and since generation and perishing pertain to the thing to which "to be" properly belongs, no accident is generated or

[3] *Compendium theologiae*, c.211, n.413.

[4] *De potentia*, q.7, a.1: "In omni composito qualicumque compositione oportet potentiam actui commisceri".

[5] Cf. I 77, 6: "Subiectum, inquantum est in potentia, est susceptivum formae accidentalis" and I-II 55, 4: "Virtus autem non habet materiam ex qua, sicut nec alia accidentia".

[6] I 3, 5: "Accidens vero est res cuius naturae debetur esse in alio". Cf. *De ente et essentia*, c.6.

perishes in the strict sense of the word, but it can be said to be generated or to perish insofar as its subject begins or ceases to be in act in regard to that accident"[7].

Accidents bring about accidental determinations of substances. Some scholastics applied the doctrine of the real distinction between being and essence also to accidents and distinguished between an accidental whatness and an accidental *esse*. Bañez, who is one of them, does, however note that this being (*esse*) is not being *per se*, but being in a substance[8]. The reason which moved Bañez to adopt this position was apparently that if one does not accept an *esse* proper to accidents, one is forced to speak of changes in the substantial *being* on each occasion that a substance undergoes changes on the level of its accidents. In addition Bañez had a theological argument: accidents in the supernatural order such as grace and charity cannot, given their content, be made to exist actually by the natural substantial being of man. Hence they must have some reality of their own. On the other hand, however, one can object against this position that only substance exists, and that accidents become real through the being of substance[9]. Some texts of Aquinas, indeed, seem to exclude being as proper to accidents[10].

However, these passages can be understood in such a way that they intend only to say that being in the full sense of the term means to exist through oneself and that this being belongs to substance alone[11]. From a number of texts it is clear that St. Thomas does not exclude an accidental being. That there must be such an *esse accidentale* is obvious since through the accidents an accidental, real mode of being results in the subject. Because being (and hence also accidental being) of itself does not express any determinate content but is determined by a form to

[7] I-II 110, 2 ad 3.

[8] See B.S. Llamzon, "Supposital and Accidental *Esse*. A Study in Bañez", in *The New Scholasticism* 39(1965) 170-188.

[9] See U.Degl'Innocenti, *Il problema della persona nel pensiero di S.Tommaso*, Roma 1967, p.228.

[10] *De veritate*, q.27, a.1 ad 8: "Similiter accidentia quia non subsistunt, non est eorum proprie esse sed subiectum est aliquale secundum ea". In the context of this passage St. Thomas affirms the real composition in respect of substances, but denies it with regard to the components of substance, such as matter and form, and the accidents. See also I 90, 2: "Accidens vero non habet esse, sed eo aliquid est et hac ratione ens dicitur". Cf. I-II 55, 4 ad 1.

[11] *Quodl. IX*, q.2, a.2: "Esse ergo proprie et vere non attribuitur nisi rei per se subsistenti; huic autem attribuitur esse duplex. Unum scilicet esse resultans ex his ex quibus eius unitas integratur, quod proprium est esse suppositi substantiale. Aliud esse est supposito attributum praeter ea quae integrant ipsum, quod est esse superadditum, scilicet accidentale, ut esse album attribuitur Socrati, cum dicitur Socrates est albus". See J.S. Albertson, "The *esse* of Accidents According to St. Thomas", in *The Modern Schoolman* 30(1952-1953) 265-278.

a particular mode of being, we must make a distinction in accidents between the form and their being real, but on condition that this *esse* is only regarded as supplementary in the whole of the existing thing[12]. Through its own being the substance does possess and realize these supplementary determinations, but it cannot make them be *formally* such; for to be Socrates is not the same as to be wise.

This accidental being results in the existing thing through the causal determination of the accidental form. It is the accident brought to reality. In thought we separate the accidental form from the resulting accidental being, but in fact there is no separation (although there is a real distinction).

The different accidents

In classical logic the different accidental determinations are deduced from the different modes of predication in language, but in metaphysics the following deduction is used: "A predicate can be related to the subject in three ways: First in such a way that it is that which the subject is, as when I say 'Socrates is an animal'... Secondly, when the predicate is taken from that which is *in* the subject; such a predicate is either in it *per se* and absolutely as consequent to matter, and so it is quantity, or as consequent to the form, and so it is quality or it is in it not absolutely but in relation to another, and thus it is in respect to something. In the third way, when the predicate is taken from that which is outside the subject, and this in two ways: on the one hand, so that it lies entirely outside the subject; and if this is not a measure determining the subject, it is predicated in the manner of a *habitus* (as when it is said that Socrates has shoes on or is dressed). However, if it is its measure, the predicament is taken either from time, and then it will be the "when", or else from place and then it will be "where", because the extrinsic measure is either time or place. It will be the "where" when we do not consider the arrangement of the parts of a thing in a certain place. If we do take this arrangement into consideration, it will be the position. In a different way, if that from which the predicament is taken, is according to something in the subject of which it is predicated. And if it is (in the subject) according to its origin, it is predicated as action, for the origin of actions is in the subject.

[12] See *In IV Sent.*, d.12, q.1, a.1, ql.3 ad 5: "Cum accidentia habeant esse et essentias proprias et eorum essentia non sit eorum esse, constat quod aliud est in eis esse et aliud quod est"; *SCG* IV, c.14: "Quia omnia accidentia sunt formae quaedam substantiae superadditae et a principiis substantiae causatae, oportet quod eorum esse sit superadditum super esse substantiae et ab ipso dependens".

However, if it is in the subject according to its terminal point, it is predicated as "passion" (scil. undergoing something), since the process of undergoing ends in the subject which undergoes"[13].

Each of these modes of being realizes being in a different manner. Being is analogous and is found in the full sense only in substance. It is not the task of metaphysics to study all the different kinds of accidents, since some accidents belong only to material being from which metaphysics abstracts. Metaphysics considers those accidents which pertain to common being as such, scil. action (and the faculties in which actions occur as well as the respective habitual determinations produced by actions) and relation[14].

Actions, faculties and habitus

All substances have some form of activity[15]. Even bodies which apparently are motionless, appear upon closer examination to exercise a gravitational activity, to exchange energy with their surroundings and to participate in the local movement of the bodies in the universe. Besides exercizing some influence on the material being of other substances, all physical bodies have a second kind of action which consists in making themselves known, i.e. a process by means of which they radiate forth and communicate their likeness to the sense faculties of man and animals[16]. Action is an expression of the perfection of things. Beings can communicate with others things and have the tendency to do so[17].

Actions are manifold. Aristotle himself distinguished between 'to make' (ποιεῖν) and 'to act' (πράττειν). The latter type of action includes knowing and striving. Plotinus made a distinction between those actions by means of which a thing posits itself and confirms itself, and a second type of action by means of which it works outside itself[18]. In the Middle

[13] *In V Metaph.*, l.9, n.891.

[14] Simplicius, *In Categ.* 22, 31ff; 78, 4-5, mentions an opinion of (ps.-)Archytas and Boethos to the effect that Aristotle's categories would not apply to immaterial substances. This view was also held by Neoplatonists.

[15] See the first part of the next chapter on causality.

[16] See *De potentia*, q.5, a.8: "...actionem secundum quod attingit ad ordinem substantiarum separatarum et participat aliquid de modo ipsarum. Haec autem est actio corporis quae non est ad transmutationem materiae sed ad quandam diffusionem similitudinis in medio".

[17] See *SCG* I 37: "Unumquodque autem ex hoc agit quod actu est. Agendo autem esse et bonitatem in alia diffundit. Unde et signum perfectionis est alicuius quod simile possit producere".

[18] See P. Henry, "The *Adversus Arium* of Marius Victorinus, the First Systematic Exposition of the Doctrine of Trinity", in *Journal of Theol.Studies, NS*, I (1950) 42-55, pp.45ff.

Ages this distinction was developed into that between immanent action and transient action.

Aquinas defines the latter as an action which proceeds towards what lies outside the agent and makes it undergo something, so that this action has the character of an influence of the agent on the thing which undergoes it. Immanent action, on the other hand, is the action which "does not go to a thing outside, but rather remains in the agent", to the extent that it "takes place entirely in the agent"[19]. The operations of the faculties of knowing and striving are such immanent activities: they take place entirely within the knowing and striving subject and serve its perfection.

With regard to this point a fundamental difficulty can be raised: can a substance simply be its own actions? Averroes taught that this is the case in immaterial substances, for these would not have any accidents[20]. Furthermore, those who profess actualism identify the intellect or the mind with its activity[21].

St. Thomas' reply to this difficulty is at the same time decisive for the presence of accidents in created being: it is impossible for a substance to be its action, since any created substance whatever is not pure actuality, but has always something potential. If a substance itself were the full realization its actions give to it, it would be pure reality (*actualitas*). However, every created substance carries some potentiality in itself, as is clear from the fact that its essence and being do not coincide; moreover, the essence of all things has only a limited perfection[22]. Nor can the *being* of created things be their actions. This is immediately clear in the case of transient action: a substance which acts outside itself does not give away its own being, but retains it; the being of the agent lies within it, while its action proceeds outward[23]. Even less can immanent actions be identified with the being of the agent: as an act of knowing or of striving the immanent action is characterized by a certain indeterminacy or infiniteness: on the level of thought one can think whatever is true and love whatever is good. Sensitive knowledge can also extend itself to everything that is perceptible by the senses. The being of things, however, is always limited to this or that individual in a particular species and to a particular genus. It is the realization and the reality of precisely this or that thing.

[19] I 54, 2.
[20] *In XII Metaph.*, comm. 25.
[21] G. Gentile, *La riforma della dialectica hegeliana*, p.198.
[22] I 54, 1.
[23] *Ibid.*, a.2.

It follows that the actions of created things must be on the level of accidental being. Only in God thinking and love are the divine being itself[24]. This does not mean that between a substance and its actions there is no intimate unity: substance is ordained towards its actions which perfect it, in the manner in which the *actus secundus* perfects the *actus primus*. In this sense we can say that action is the goal and end of the substance[25].

If actions are accidents, substances must be endowed with faculties which can become actions and are actions in potency. These faculties are on the same level as the actions; hence they are also accidents[26]. On this point St. Thomas' doctrine differs notably from Augustinianism which identified the faculties with the essence of the soul. William of Auvergne was a champion of the latter theory[27]. Other medieval thinkers of the Franciscan School did not go so far as to identify the soul and its faculties, but viewed the latter as essential properties of the soul. This means, however, that the faculties are not accidents but must be reduced to the essence[28]. When St. Thomas makes the faculties accidents, he does not mean that the faculties do not inhere permanently in the substance. They arise from substance in a relationship of dependence which results from the very nature of the substance[29].

Relations

Another class of accidental being present in all substances are the relations. To understand better what 'relative' means we consider first the various meanings of "absolute":

a) God is most absolute, since he is not dependent on anything else but exists entirely through himself. He is Absolute Being without any qualifications.

b) In a less complete sense substances can also be called absolute because they exist *per se* (in the limited sense we have defined in the previous chapter).

c) In an even more restricted sense of the term such accidents as

[24] *Ibidem.*
[25] I-II 105, 5: "...cum omnis res sit propter suam operationem. Semper enim imperfectum est propter perfectius. Sicut igitur materia est propter formam, ita forma quae est actus primus est propter suam operationem, quae est actus secundus et sic operatio est finis rei creatae".
[26] *Quaestio disp. de anima*, a.12: "Potentia enim ad actum dicitur correlative".
[27] *De anima*, c.3, pars 6.
[28] Cf. St. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, d.24, p.1, a.2, q.1.
[29] I 77, 7 ad 1: "...per naturalem quandam resultationem".

actions and faculties can be called absolute. Although they cannot exist on their own, they contain a positive perfection, which enriches the substance.

d) Finally, there is a class of beings which no longer have anything absolute or any positive content but whose entire being is "being relative to something else". This is the category of relations. When dealing with relations in metaphysics, we are inclined to view them as "things", that is as absolute beings. Since they are not, our concepts require to be corrected in this respect.

A substance is always related to other substances: it is similar to or differs from them; it can also have a relationship of cause and effect with them, etc. This "being related" belongs to the predicament of relations. In such a relationship there is a thing that is related, something else to which it is related (the *terminus relationis*) and the aspect under which it is related to that other thing (e.g. the same size; a causal action). This aspect is called the foundation of the relation, but one should notice that in the strict sense of the word substance alone is the ultimate ontological foundation of relations. Most relations exist in substances insofar as these are determined by other accidents, such as size, quality or action[30].

The foundation of a relation is that determination of a substance by means of which it has a relation to another substance. Thus the size of a thing is the basis for relations of similarity to and difference from other things with a similar or different size. Qualities can also be the basis for this kind of relation. Moreover, because of its causal action, a substance has the relation which a cause has to the effect it brings about, while vice versa that which undergoes this action has a relation of dependence with regard to the agent. In daily language we express relations of this second type with the aid of such verbs as giving, receiving, doing, moving etc. The relations expressed by such terms as father and son, master and pupil etc., belong also to this class.

A property of relations is their reciprocity[31]. For relations express a particular way in which two things are related which can only be understood when we consider these things together. We do not know what a father is, if we do not have the concept "son". At this point it should be noted that this reciprocity consists sometimes of one real relation and one which only exists in thought: e.g., our knowledge is

[30] *In I Sent.*, d.2, expos.textus ad 2: "Relationes fundantur super aliquid quod est causa ipsarum in subiecto, sicut aequalitas super quantitatem..."

[31] Cf. *Categ.* 6 b 28: πάντα δὲ τὰ πρός τι πρὸς ἀντιστρέφοντα λέγεται.

really dependent on the things in nature which we see, while the latter are related only in thought to our knowledge.

The two terms which are mutually related stand in contrast to one another. This relative contrast is the weakest form of opposition and comes close to a certain equality of the terms.

The history of the theory of relations

When we examine the nature and the reality of the relation Aristotle's theory must first be dealt with. Aristotle places the relations under the accidents, with the understanding that they are furthest removed from substance and have the least reality of all accidents. He considers a relation the "thinnest" being, which does not itself become or change but is only said of something with regard to something else [32]. A relation itself is not some particular thing but is "being related to something else".

As has been said already relations depend on substance,—often insofar as the latter is determined by accidents. The cause of the relation is the substance, together with these accidents[33]. The causality through which the relations arise cannot be reduced to efficient causality because no effect is produced which is separate from the foundation. We have to do here with a kind of formal causality: when a thing acquires a certain size, a relation of equality or inequality is constituted at the same time.

Aristotle was so much convinced of the fact that a relation itself is not some one thing but merely means that a thing has a relation to something else, that he drew from this insight an argument against Plato's theory of Ideas: according to Plato there are ideas of equality and inequality and these Ideas, as all Ideas, are subsistent. But, Aristotle observes, that what is related to something else (τὰ πρός τι) cannot be subsistent[34].

Plotinus devotes a fairly extensive treatise to relations and he especially raises the question as to whether relations are real (εἰ ὑπόστασις τις). To this he replies that many relations exist only in the human mind (ἡ παραβολὴ παρ' ἡμῶν, οὐκ ἐν αὐτοῖς). Nevertheless he argues that in certain cases reality itself is related, even if we do not think about it. For

[32] *Metaph.* 1088 a 30-35. Cf. I-II 110, 2 ad 3: "Proprie loquendo nullum accidens neque fit neque corrumpitur, sed dicitur fieri vel corrumpi secundum quod subiectum incipit vel desinit esse in actu secundum illud accidens".

[33] An accident does not produce another accident unless insofar as it is a *causa praeparans* or *disponens*. See *In III Sent.*, d.33, q.2, a.4, sol.1.

[34] Cf. *Metaph.* 990 b 16 and H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, New York 1944, p.28.

instance, two equally large things are alike, even without our being concerned with them[35]. Plotinus next distinguishes between relations of likeness and difference, between the knower and the object known and those between cause and effect.

St. Augustine introduced the concept of relation into the theology of the Trinity[36] and observed that the "to another", which characterizes the divine Persons, who are turned to one another, is not something accidental in God.—Boethius describes a relation as that which does not belong to the subject *per se*, but which is attributed to it from the outside as soon as the term of comparison is present[37]. A relation adds nothing and removes nothing and so Boethius seems to reduce relations practically to things of reason (*entia rationis*)[38]. Pursuing the history of the concept of relation after St. Thomas we see that Ockham denied the reality of relations[39], while Locke reduced relations to something which is added to the simple ideas but is not present in them when these ideas come to us from reality[40]. He apparently denied their reality, as does Hume for that matter. Hume's criticism became the stimulus for Kant to make the relation a subjective category of the human mind. The realist can go along with Hume to the extent of admitting that formally relation is not perceptible to the senses, no more than substance *qua* subsistent subject is, and that in some cases only the foundation of the relation is known (similarity or difference in size or in qualities perceptible to the senses). However, this does not exclude at all that relations can be real, as will be seen below. William James adopts a point of view contrary to British empiricism as he holds that we experience real relations[41]. In various currents of recent thought the relative has become a dominant category: everything is thought to be dependent on the standpoint adopted by the observer and the moment in time in which he carries out his observations. In modern science all material things are conceived as interrelated.

[35] *Enneads* VI 1, 5 and 7.
[36] *De Trinitate* V 5.
[37] *De Trinitate* V.
[38] He gives this definition: "...quae tota non in eo quod est esse consistit sed in eo quod est in comparatione aliquo modo se habere nec semper ad aliud sed aliquoties ad idem".
[39] Cf his *Summa totius logicae*, pars I, c.49: "Relatio non est alia res distincta ab omni re absoluta, sed tantum sunt nomina relativa".
[40] See his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, ch.25,10: "...Something else separate and exterior to the existence of that thing".
[41] *Principles of Psychology*, I,ch.9, 3: "If there be such things as feelings at all, then so surely as relations between objects exist *in rerum natura*, so surely and more surely do feelings exist to which these relations are known".

The division of relations. The problem of their reality

After this brief historical summary we must deal with the division of the relations, the question of their reality and finally their relationship to the foundation on which they rest. With regard to their division a first distinction is that between real relations and relations which exist only in our thought. In the second place we distinguish between reciprocal and non-reciprocal relations: the relation of our knowledge to the thing perceived is not reciprocal, nor is the relation of creatures to God[42].—The first of these divisions is analogous, the second accidental.

The division of relations according to their nature is as follows: a) Relations which depend on the fact that a thing receives its being from something else. This occurs in efficient, exemplary or final causality or in the determination which the cognitive and appetitive faculties receive from their respective objects. b) Relations which do not depend on causality. These are relations between things based on likeness or difference in substantial being and its content or in accidental being, namely extension, quality, action and undergoing a causal influence (*passio*)[43].

A relation itself cannot be the foundation for a relation of likeness or difference, because it is in itself already relative to everything to which it is related[44]. Likewise there are no relations of likeness or difference on the basis of time, place, location or habitus, because these accidents are consequent upon the relations rather than causing them[45]. For instance, the *where* is consequent upon the position of a thing, viz. on its relation of distance to the other parts of the universe; the *when* results from the relation of the being and actions of a substance to process in the universe at large.

With regard to the question of whether relations are real, we observe that there are relations which exist only in our thought. For example, if one says that a collection of paintings in a museum is admired by many, this 'being admired by people' adds nothing to the works of art in question. But those who actually admire the paintings are really related

[42] I 13, 7.
[43] Cf. *SCG* IV, c.14.
[44] *SCG* II, c.18: "Relatio non refertur per aliam relationem, quia sic esset abire in infinitum, sed per seipsam refertur quia essentialiter relatio est". Cf. *De potentia*, q.3, a.3 ad 2.
[45] *In V Metaph.*, l.17, n.1005: "...alia vero genera magis consequuntur relationem quam possint relationem causare. Nam 'quando' consistit in aliquali relatione ad tempus, 'ubi' vero ad locum; 'positio' autem ordinem partium importat, 'habitus' autem relationem habentis ad habitum".

to them, for human knowledge and affections are really determined by their objects. Likewise an effect is actually the effect of a cause, and a cause is the cause of what it brings about.—Finally, things are alike or different: whether a human person observes a likeness between things or not, makes no difference. This means that these relations are independent of our thinking and exist as such.

Given the existence of God (an assumption which will be demonstrated in Part II), it follows that the things which proceed from God's being and unity are not without a real relationship to one another.

In regard to the question of the connection of a relation with its foundation, it may be noted here that both are distinct, since the foundation has a positive content of its own, different from its being related to something else. Furthermore, foundation and relation are sometimes distinct because they can be separated from one another. For example, a father who loses his children retains that on which the relation of fatherhood rested but he no longer has any actual relation to his children.

As we have observed before, a relation is attributed to a substance to the extent that the latter is determined by the foundation of the relation. For this reason the relation presupposes distinct substances, which it relates to one another[46]. Because a relation has no content of its own, it is not caused by an efficient cause but results in formal dependence on the foundation when its terminus is present[47]. If the terminus ceases to exist, the relation is no more. This implies that the things in the universe are much more closely connected to one another than an extreme individualistic view is inclined to concede.

To understand this mysterious connection between things, we must recall that being itself is not tied to place but only becomes so through the secondary effect of extension. In this way we can at least conceive to a certain extent how things are connected with one another through an aura of relations: the ontological foundation in each substance causes one relation of likeness to all similar things and one relation of difference to all different things in the universe. A father has only one relation of fatherhood to his children. The reason for this is that a relation is already a disposition towards a terminus and a multiplicity of relations resulting from a single foundation is totally meaningless.

[46] See I 40, 2 ad 4: "Relatio praesupponit distinctionem suppositorum quando est accidens".

[47] See Joannes a Sancto Thoma, *Cursus philosophicus. Logica*, pars II, q.17 a (Reiser, I, p.576b).

Transcendental relations (relationes transcendentales)

Substance and accidents are ordained towards one another, as are matter and form. This ordering towards one another can be called a relation, but of course we are dealing here with something completely different from the predicamental relations which have just been discussed. Substance and accidents, matter and form, *actus primus* and *actus secundus* are ordained towards one another, and this order is precisely the content of these realities themselves and not a relation added to them.

While the predicamental relations are the "thinnest" beings[48], the realities we are now dealing with are positive things with a content of their own which is ordained towards something else. This being towards something else is called a transcendental relationship. Despite criticism by some[49] this terminology can be used, provided that one realizes that something entirely different from the predicamental relation is meant here: the latter is only one particular, extremely thin accidental reality, while the transcendental relations express a positive content and are found in various categories. St. Thomas himself does not use the expression (he reserves the term for predicamental relations and relations of thought), but he is aware of the matter in question. Thus he speaks of a substance being ordained to its accidents[50], of accidents to substance[51], of matter and form to one another[52], of the faculty to its action[53], of the soul to the body[54], of creatures to God[55].

James of Viterbo and Petrus Nigri were the first to use the expression "transcendental relations". James explained it by appealing to Simplicius and asserted that this relation of the essences of things to other things is found in various genera (e.g., in the categories of substance and quality) and hence may be called transcendental[56]. Speaking explicitly of

[48] Aquinas calls the being of the relations a "postremum et infimum esse" (*SCG* IV, c.14).

[49] Cf. A. Krempel, *La doctrine de la relation chez saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Paris 1952; *id.*, "Anerkannte Thomas transzendentale Beziehungen?", in *Philos.Jahrbuch* 67(1959) 171-178.

[50] I 3, 6: "Subiectum comparatur ad accidens sicut potentia ad actum".

[51] *De potentia*, q.7, a.4 ad 7: "Accidentia non dicuntur entia nisi per relationem ad substantiam".

[52] *In II Phys.*, lectio 4, n.172-174: "Nam materia est de numero eorum quae sunt ad aliquid quia dicitur ad formam".

[53] *In II De anima*, l.2, n.366: "Nam potentia nihil aliud est quam quidam ordo ad actum".

[54] *In I Sent.*, d.15, q.5, a.3.

[55] We mean the order of all creatures to God, but not the predicamental relation of dependence, based on their being created. Cf. *De potentia*, q.7, a.9 ad 4: "...creatura refertur ad Deum secundum suam substantiam sicut secundum causam relationis; secundum vero ipsam relationem formaliter".

[56] See the *Quaestiones Parisiis disputatae de praedicamentis in divinis*, of James of

transcendental relations can prove helpful as it enables us to understand better how the components of things are intrinsically ordained to one another.

Viterbo (ms Rome, Angelica 213, f.23r), quoted after A. Pattin, "La relation transcendantale et la synthèse métaphysique thomiste", in *Tommaso d'Aquino nel suo settimo centenario. Atti del congresso internazionale*, VI, pp.303-310, p.303.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

CAUSALITY

Causality has been mentioned already on a number of occasions in earlier chapters. We have argued, for instance, that the *esse* realizes the essence, while the essence makes the *esse* into the being of precisely this thing. We have given activity a prominent place among the accidents. The moment has come now for a systematic reflection on causality: having studied common being, its properties, its division and components we must now consider the causes of being.

Causality in general

Causality is one of the elementary data of human experience. Verbs such as to make, to do, to act, to receive, to undergo indicate basic experiences of causality; being itself can be called activity in a certain sense, and hence the study of causality is of major importance in metaphysics, as it helps us to understand being better when we know it in its causes, clarify data of elementary experience and find the way to the Absolute and First Reality. In Volume Two it will be shown that in order to provide the definite explanation of the processes occurring in the various genera of causes, we are obliged to accept the existence of a First Being who is pure act, first efficient cause, subsistent necessary being, "most being", first orderer and ultimate end.

In a well-known text St. Thomas observes that whenever man sees an effect he wishes by nature to know the cause[1]. Apparently man knows naturally that there is causality, that something which comes into being depends on something else and that everything in the universe is either a cause or is caused, as things would otherwise not be ordained to one another[2]. Everything which has a certain goodness is in one way or another the cause of something[3]. A being is a particular perfection either through receiving this perfection, or by being this perfection formally,

[1] I 12, 1: "Inest enim homini naturale desiderium cognoscendi causam, cum intuetur effectum et ex hoc admiratio in hominibus consurgit".

[2] See *SCG* III, c.107: "Quidquid est in rebus oportet quod vel causa vel causatum sit; alioquin ordinem non haberet".

[3] *SCG* III, c.14: "Bonum autem omne est alicuius aliquomodo causa". —In his *Adv. Marcion* I, 12, 1 Tertullian argues that whatever is, must be a cause. He probably means that it cannot be without an activity.

by bringing it about in other things and by being a final cause. Since to the extent that a cause is a cause, it cannot be dependent on matter (for causality is also found in immaterial beings), the study of causality as such belongs to metaphysics[4].

For this reason it is not surprising that the very beginnings of philosophy are characterized by the search for causes: the philosophers of the Ionian school attempted to discover the material cause of things; they viewed generation and perishing as a modification of one and the same matter which always remains present, i.e. changes take place, but there is no real becoming of something new. This view continued to be accepted for a long time in Greek philosophy of nature.

Parmenides, however, considered all becoming to be impossible. Empedocles and the Atomists degraded generation and perishing to a combination or separation of elements or atoms. Anaxagoras asserted that all things are already present in a latent way[5]. The Platonists likewise did not acknowledge a real coming-into-being, because they believed that the Forms are added to matter from outside the physical world. They overlooked the fact, as St. Thomas notes, that the (substantial) forms of the material things do not exist by themselves, but that through them these things are. Hence not the substantial form as such is generated, but the thing to which this form belongs.

Avicenna held a view close to the Platonic theory. He did not explain generation[6]. Many later philosophers struggled also with the problem of causality. For example, causality does not fit in very well in the system of Descartes. David Hume holds that causality is not given in our experience and Kant turns the concepts of cause and effect into subjective, a priori categories. These opinions make a careful investigation necessary.

Origin and meaning of the term cause

By cause we denote the thing from which something proceeds in such a way that the being of what proceeds is dependent on it[7]. The term

[4] *In II Metaph.*, l.5, n.176: "Considerare de causis inquantum huiusmodi proprium est philosophi primi: nam causa in eo quod causa est, non dependet a materia secundum esse".

[5] See the well-known text of Aquinas in I 45, 8: "Quidam posuerunt (formas) non incipere per actionem naturae, sed prius in materia exstitisse ponentes latitationem formarum. Et hoc accidit eis ex ignorantia materiae, quia nesciebant distinguere inter potentiam et actum. Quia enim formae praeexistunt in materia in potentia, posuerunt eas simpliciter praeexistere".

[6] See I 65, 4.

[7] The scholastics define a cause as a "principium positivum unde aliquid procedit secundum dependentiam in esse".

principle is broader than 'cause', because principle refers to that from which something proceeds in whatever way, scil. in the order of thought (conclusions follow from premisses); in the order of reality, either a) in a negative manner (as a privation in a subject precedes a new form) or b) in a positive manner, when the principle gives being to something or also in such a way that it does not give being (e.g. a point which is the principle of a line). In the latter case a principle either gives being with a resulting relationship of dependence of that which proceeds from it or in such a way that no dependence in being results[8].

In classical Greek two terms are used to express the concept of cause, viz. ἀρχή and αἰτία. *Arche* occurs as early as Homer, meaning 'beginning', 'point of departure', 'source from which or through which'. Anaximander was the first philosopher to use the term to signify the original state of things as well as the material from which the world developed[9]. The second term, αἰτία, came into use in the fifth century B.C. It means in the first place personal responsibility of an action, blame, accusation, but the meaning of cause apparently was transferred from the human action for which one is responsible to causality in general. A variant is αἴτιον, a term which is first found in the *Corpus Hippocraticum*[10]. Alexander of Aphrodisias observes that the primary meaning of *arche* is that *from which*, whereas *aitia* signifies that *through which*[11]. Generally *arche* has a much broader sense than αἰτία[12]. In Aristotle's works αἰτία is used in a wide variety of meanings; it signifies each factor which is required to produce something or to make it continue to exist.

In addition to the term *principium* the Latin language has also *causa*, a term which signifies a lawsuit, matter of dispute and hence cause and circumstances of an action. *Causa* is sometimes derived from *cavere* (to defend), but also from *cudo* so that the original meaning of the term would be that of manslaughter. It is noteworthy that in both Greek and Latin terms meaning moral responsibility and human causality were used to signify causality in general. This indicates that, formally speaking, causality does not come under sense perception and that we gain

[8] This last distinction is made in consideration of the mystery of divine Trinity: there is generation in God but no causality: the divine Persons who proceed are not causally dependent on those from whom they proceed.

[9] See Simplicius, *In Physicam* 150, 22.

[10] See the treatise *De vetere medicina*.

[11] *In Metaphysicam* 247, 8ff.

[12] Simplicius, *In Physicam* 11, 16.

more easily access to it from the experience of our own actions of which at any rate we know to be the cause responsible for them.

Highlights of the history of the philosophy of causality

As we have seen above, material causality dominated in the theories of the pre-Socratics. The concept of efficient causality begins to break through gradually and hestitatingly with Empedocles: Love and Envy reconcile or divide the four elements, but it is not clear whether these two factors differ specifically from the elements themselves. Anaxagoras believed in a mind which set the cosmic process in motion. In Plato's works the soul and the demiurge are introduced as efficient causes. Aristotle, who was the first philosopher to distinguish four genera of causes, defines efficient causality. But his reflections on this kind of causality are restricted practically to the cause of movement and do not enter upon the question of the cause of being.

The Atomists occupy an important position in the history of the concept of causality. Democritus rejected the mythical- religious version of the origin of the world, and likewise the theory of chance as a cosmic cause[13]. He denies also that there are final causes in the universe and accepts only mechanical causality (movement and collision of atoms). This view, which was sharply contested by Plato in the tenth book of the *Laws*, was to recur again and again in the history of philosophy.

Plato's contribution to the development of the doctrine of the causes is the discovery of formal causality. He describes how Socrates originally viewed the causal processes as something belonging to material causality (one grows because one eats and adds new matter), but how later he came to understand that a man does not become a unity in this way[14]. Addition alone is insufficient; only through the essence (the form) can something become essence. Plato developed this insight into formal causality in such a way that he came to stress the vertical dependence of things on higher principles: the forms which exist in purity outside the material world, cause their likeness in the things subject to change, but they do not really enter into them. Plato was also aware of final causality: the idea of the Good radiates order throughout the whole world. As a matter of fact, Aristotle asserts that Plato considered the material and

[13] Diels, "Democritus", A 68.
[14] *Phaedo* 97c.

formal causes only[15]. However, this criticism must apparently be understood as referring to the essentials of Plato's system in which the primary causality is that of the Ideas on the one hand and of the receptacle (matter or space) on the other. Simplicius quotes Theophrastus and Alexander of Aphrodisias in support of his contention that Plato already knew all four causes[16].

Whatever Plato's merits may be, Aristotle is the first philosopher to distinguish explicitly four kinds of causality and to point out that there are no other causes beside these four[17]. The concept 'cause' is analogous since, depending on the kind of causality it refers to, it receives a different meaning while one common aspect remains, scil. something proceeds with dependence in being. These four kinds of causality will be studied in the next chapter.

Aristotle is sometimes accused of using anthropomorphic or animist notions in his doctrine of the four genera of causality, insofar as he considers the way in which man makes things out of some material in view of an end as the model of all causal processes. Nevertheless, one can show that this so-called human model holds also for cosmic events and for all processes. However, the following criticism of Aristotle's doctrine is possible: he attempted to explain what occurs in and around this concrete thing, but did not inquire into the cause of being. Thus in a sense he limits himself to what is often called the 'horizontal' explanation of generation and perishing. In this connection we should also mention Aristotle's view that science is the knowledge of causes and that infinite regress is impossible in a chain of efficient causes each of which depends in its activity on the cause immediately preceding it[18].

Epicurus takes over Democritus' materialism and accepts only a mechanical causality. There is no design in the world: all teleological order is to be excluded. According to the Stoa every movement has a cause of its own; the chain of causes is eternal. The cosmic force (*pneuma*) acts in everything, and nothing can escape from it[19]. Against the two last-mentioned schools the Greek scepticist philosophers argue that the causes Epicureans and the Stoics speak about (atoms and pneuma) are invisible and thus cannot be called real. Aenaesidemus formulates this criticism as follows: explanations which resort to causal-

[15] *Metaph.* 988 a 10ff.
[16] *In Physicam* 26, 5.
[17] *Metaph.* I, ch.7.
[18] Concerning Aristotle's theory of the causes see J. Follon, "Réflexions sur la théorie aristotélicienne des quatre causes", in *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 86(1988) 317-353.
[19] M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa, I*, p.101.

ity refer to things which cannot be perceived and receive no support from phenomena; there are contradictions in the various causal explanations[20]. It is not certain that Aenaesidemus rejected all causality: possibly he accepted perceptible causes[21].

The Neoplatonists taught that the Eternal and First Principle has no cause, but that among things which come into being, everything must be caused[22]. The One, scil. the first principle which has no cause, is the cause of itself: without abandoning itself and losing anything of itself, it emits the lower hypostasis from itself; from these the other hypostases flow forth[23]. In Proclus' thought the maxim "everything is in everything but in each thing in its own way" provides the framework in which causality must be placed: every being is a cause but it is so in its own way.

An interresting development took place in the Islamic world: Al-Ghazzali (1058-1111) tried to defend Islamic orthodoxy against philosophical determinism by arguing that God produces all his effects immediately. As Averroes observed, according to this view it is only by custom that we recur to the concept of causality. Nicholas of Autrecourt, David Hume and others argued along the same lines[24].

St. Thomas' doctrine of causality will be dealt with below. We first pass to the later history of the philosophical theories of causality. Ockham did not forthright reject the concept of cause, and accepted also the division of causes into four genera; nevertheless he opened the door for empiricism by rejecting the view that one can prove the existence of a cause through deduction. Ockham recognized only the argument based on presence: we can say that A is the cause of B, if B follows when A is present and does not follow when A is absent, while other things may be present[25]. According to Nicholas of Autrecourt causes are no more accessible to experience than substances. We have to reason in order to infer their existence. This makes our knowledge of them uncertain: effects may not always require causes and God could do perhaps without secondary causes[26]. Nicholas was followed by others[27].

[20] See Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrh. Hypomn.*, I 180-185.
[21] See Ch.L. Stough, *Greek Scepticism*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1969, p.100.
[22] Plotinus, *Enneads* III 1, 1.
[23] *O.c.*, VI 8, 18.
[24] See William H.D. Neill, "Some Attacks on Causality prior to Hume", in *Vivarium* 4(1966) 58-65.
[25] See F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol.III, part 1, ch.4, 4.
[26] Cf. J. Lappe, *Nicolaus von Autrecourt. BGPhThMA* VI, 2, Münster 1908, 12*-13*.
[27] L. Kennedy, "Philosophical Scepticism in England in the Mid-Fourteenth Century", *Vivarium* 21(1983) 35-58, pp.39ff.

Although Descartes considered the principle of causality as absolutely true[28], his view that material substance is essentially extension led to the rejection of causality. According to the Scholastics processes take place in substances and have causes, which are of a particular nature. However, Descartes sets this inner nature aside: movement is merely the fact of particles changing their place. God is the cause of the beginning of this movement of the particles. In a posthumous work of Descartes, published in 1664 by one of his disciples, Louis de la Forge, Descartes argues that outside factors cannot influence our soul. Shortly afterwards De la Forge wrote a treatise of his own, in which he tried to show that causes cannot act upon our soul from the outside, no more than physiological factors do. We have no *idée claire* of such a supposed action of the corporeal things on the soul and hence we must reject it. A few years later Cordemoy applied this to all movements: the mind can be a cause, but bodies with extension cannot. In 1672 a group of Cartesian philosophers published together a work, in which they argued that only God can cause movement. Malebranche vigorously defended this position and reasoned that we have no clear idea of what an action of a body on another could be. Therefore, we must consider God as the only cause of movement.

This view had a great influence on his contemporaries, particularly on Leibniz and Hume. Malebranche arrived at his theory through his desire to ascribe all honour and power to God and to emphasize the imperfection of creatures. Besides, if other things than God could act on us, we would be subjected to these things and have to fear or to love them[29]. Malebranche's view of causality is called occasionalism, a doctrine characterized by the rejection of all mutual causality among created things and the thesis that God causes all movements and change in the universe.

The roots of occasionalism go back a long way in history. Stoicism teaches that all events are inevitable and that man must accept what happens: "Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt"[30].

Occasionalism was particularly prevalent in Islam: the Koran teaches the absolute dominion of God as well as the nothingness of creatures. This doctrine suggested to some the idea that the universe is discontinuous and that God does everything, while creatures have no influence on each other. This metaphysics was taught by Al-Ghazali and led to the

[28] *Principia philosophiae*, I, c.49.
[29] *Recherche de la Vérité*, vol.2, livre 6, ch.3.
[30] Seneca, *Epist. ad Lucilium*, 107.

well-known attitude of fatalism, according to which men carry out the decrees of their master like puppets. Inspired by a mystic experience Al-Ghazali attacked Aristotle's cosmology which to him appeared to be in conflict with the doctrine of divine omnipotence and to leave no space for miracles. He substituted it by a theory which considered the world as the sum of discontinuous realities.

Some Islamic philosophers attempted to soften this absolute doctrine somewhat by suggesting that, although God creates our actions, man nonetheless makes these his own[31]. The Jewish thinker Maimonides made this discussion known in the West and pointed to an argument which was frequently adduced in order to defend the exclusion of all created causality: All natural forms which we perceive are accidents. However, accidents cannot move from one subject to another; hence there is no causality[32]. It would seem that this view had been prepared to some extent by Avicenna who wrote that all forms are given only by the Giver of Forms (*Dator formarum*) and that the causality of lower beings is no more than the producing of the required dispositions in matter.

The great philosopher Averroes contested these views of Al-Ghazali and the Mutakallims by showing that if things no longer have any action we can no longer know and define them, and hence everything becomes an indeterminate mass. The rejection of causality means the rejection of knowledge. Averroes did not indicate how God's action goes together with the causality of created things[33].

Pursuing our summary, we arrive at Spinoza, who did accept causality but in keeping with his philosophical system he placed it entirely within the one divine being: God is the immanent cause of the things which are in his being[34]. Leibniz's monads cannot act upon one another and in this connection Leibniz develops the theory of pre-established harmony (*harmonia praestabilita*): in virtue of God's all-embracing plan the state of one monad corresponds to that of another so much, that it looks as if one monad is acting upon another. As much as possible

[31] Cf.L. Stein, "Antike und mitteralterliche Vorläufer des Occasionalismus", in *Archiv f.Geschichte der Philos. 2(1889) 192-245;* id., "Zur Geschichte des Occasionalismus", *ibid.* 1(1888) 53-61.

[32] *Guide of the Perplexed*, I, ch.73.

[33] See M. Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism and its Critique by Averroes and Aquinas*, London 1958, p.16. Cf. *Summa theologiae* I 115, 1: "Fuerunt aliqui qui totaliter corporibus actiones subtraxerunt et haec est opinio Avicebron in libro *Fontis vitae*, ubi per rationes quae tactae sunt, probare nititur quod nullum corpus agit, sed omnes actiones quae videntur esse corporum, sunt actiones cuiusdam virtutis spiritualis". See also *De veritate*, q.5, a.9 ad 4.

[34] *Ethica*, prop. XVI and XVIII.

Leibniz replaces the concept of cause by that of the *reason* why something is[35].

David Hume occupies an important position in the history of philosophical reflection on the concept of causality. He holds that sense perception can never ascertain anything other than the continuity and the successive occurrence of two phenomena: "... there appears not throughout all nature, any one instance of connection which is conceivable by us. All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we can never observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined but never connected .... The necessary conclusion seems to be that we have no idea of connection or of power and that these words are absolutely without any meaning when employed either in philosophical reasoning or common life ..." . Hence Hume said "a cause to be an object followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second"[36]. By considering causes as events with a "before" and "after" Hume shows that he has not understood Aristotle's concept of cause; it also led him to exclude form and matter as causes.

Kant follows Hume and thinks that sense perception shows us a degree of regularity in succession but no causal connections. The difference between Kant's view and that of Hume is that Kant attributes an active role to the human subject: it projects regularities; cause and effect are apriori categories of the human mind which it imposes on the material that comes to it from experience. In this way Kant turns the mechanical explanation of nature into a subjective necessity of the human intellect.

The gradual penetration of a mathematical approach in the natural sciences, in particular in the description of phenomena, relegated the study of causes to the background[37]. This development reached a climax with Ernst Mach and Bertrand Russell: both wished to replace causality by the concept of functional correlation[38] and so one may speak of a devaluation of causality[39]. Alongside of this trend we must mention also the rise of indeterminism as a reaction against the prevailing determinism. Since the time of Galileo, Descartes, Kepler and Newton a determinist vision of the physical world had dominated, but the discovery of

[35] See below our discussion of the principle of sufficient reason.

[36] *Concerning Human Understanding*, section VII, part 2. According to Hume Aristotle failed to notice the difference between the *post hoc* and the *propter hoc*.

[37] Cf. I. Newton, *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica*, liber III, reg.1.

[38] Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, p.180.

[39] Cf. J.E. Heyde, *Entwertung der Kausalität*, Stuttgart 1957.

the constant of Planck (h) led to indeterminism. Determinism holds the world to be a system of moving bodies according to certain rules which can be known so that the results can be calculated. According to Huxley this applies also to organic life, for its processes are nothing else than the result of molecular movements. Man is also subject to this chain of causality[40]. According to determinism every movement can be calculated if one knows the original situation of a system and the laws which determine the behaviour of the matter involved in it.

The discovery of Planck's constant meant that for sub-atomic systems it is impossible to determine the original situation, since the light with the help of which we attempt to study an atom or atomic particles adds energy and in this way it changes the momentum and the place of these particles. This led to the conviction that there is no longer any ultimate determinability and that atomic models are only a symbolic approach to reality.

Heisenberg argued that by means of quantum mechanics the invalidity of the principle of causality had now been definitely established and formulated the principle of uncertainty: the product of the uncertainty of a place and the uncertainty of the momentum is never less than Planck's constant[41]. Agreeing with Heisenberg many physicists rejected determinism.

However, the impossibility of determining all processes in detail and of pinpointing with total precision the place of atomic particles at a given moment does not mean that objectively there are no, or no knowable causal connections. As Max Planck had argued, there must be a harmony between the world of sense perception (in which we experience causality) and the microstructure of things. In the view of Einstein, Schrödinger, L. de Broglie and others indeterminism results from the conditions under which the experiments are done; indeterminism is not an objective fact but a subjective product[42].

The transsubjectivity of causality

On account of those philosophical theories which combat the reality of causal processes or the possibility of being certain about them, we must

[40] See J. Stuart Mill, *Logic*, Book VI, ch.1, 2: human actions are "like all other natutal events, subject to invariable laws".

[41] See his "Über den anschaulichen Inhalt der quantentheoretischen Kinematik und Mechanik", in *Zeitschrift für Physik* 43 (1927). He concludes by stating that "durch die Quantenmechanik ist die Ungültigkeit des Kausalgesetzes definitiv festgestellt".

[42] L. De Broglie, *Nouvelles perspectives en microphysique*, p.226.

demonstrate the objective reality of causality. The answer given by classical metaphysics is as short as it is simple:

a) From our own experience we know that we do things and that external things act upon us. We know that due to our decision and through our action changes take place and in this way we experience ourselves as causes.

b) There are many things which did not exist originally and later came to be; now, we know with certitude that nothing comes from nothing[43]. It follows that the coming into being of something requires a cause.

When we say that we form the concept of cause from our experience, we do not intend to say that our external and internal senses know causality as such. The senses do experience effects impressed upon us such as, for instance, being warmed, but they do not experience it as the effect of a cause, although that is what the effect really is. "Therefore we say that although the action of the intellect arises from the senses, nonetheless it knows many things in the thing apprehended which the senses cannot perceive"[44]. Causality, therefore, is a *sensibile per accidens* because it is known directly by the intellect in that which is perceived by the senses[45]. The intellect knows causality because through its collaboration with the *cogitativa* it understands this effect (e.g. getting warmer) not merely as something with a content of itself but as an effect, that is as caused by another thing[46].

Causation does not mean that the cause gives away something of itself in the sense of an accident moving from one substance to another. An accident is a determination added to and sustained by a subject which sets its mark on it; another subject is an individually different being. Hence, instead of affirming that causality is the passing on of an accident to another subject, we should rather say that the substance which undergoes a causal action is raised to that state of being the efficient cause is aiming at to bring about. In the process of causality, especially in efficient causality, there is openness to the other and being determined by the other[47].

[43] St. Thomas writes that it is a common conviction that nothing comes from nothing (*In XI Metaph.*, l.6,n.2227: "commune dogma...quod nihil fit ex non ente sed omne quod fit, fit ex ente".

[44] I 78, 4 ad 4: "...dicendum quod licet intellectus operatio oriatur a sensu, tamen in re apprehensa multa cognoscit quae sensus percipere non potest".

[45] *In II De anima*, l.13, n.396: "...statim quod ad occursum rei sensatae apprehenditur intellectu".

[46] *L.c.*, n.398.

[47] See *SCG* I 37: "Unumquodque autem ex hoc agit quod actu est. Agendo autem esse et bonitatem in alia diffundit. Unde et signum perfectionis est alicuius quod simile possit

In intracosmic processes causality always brings about a change. But in the causality by means of which God keeps creatures in existence, no change occurs in the latter. Even so creatures are permanently dependent on God's action[48]. In causality something new comes into being: there is more than before the cause began to act. Ultimately this "more" can only be explained if we consider causality as a participation in God's action which makes created causes act and which produces the effect under the aspect of being[49].

Insofar as causality is action it belongs to this particular predicament and cannot be reduced to any of the other categories of being. We cannot explain it in terms of qualities and things which are not action. Causality is one of the *prima simplicia*, scil. the basic facts of our own original and unique experience[50].

The four genera of causality

In what we developed thus far we had in mind primarily efficient causality. However, causality occurs in four genera and these ways of being a cause are realized in an analogous manner. That from which something arises and which remains present as a constitutive element is called the material cause. That which determines a thing essentially or in an accidental manner is called the formal cause. The immediate source of the movement or the coming to rest of something is the cause of change[51] . Finally, the term cause is used to refer to the end for the sake of which something is done or occurs.

Referring to Aristotle's summary of these four genera of causality St. Thomas observes that "it is necessary that there be four causes. For since that is a cause in relation to which the being of another thing

producere". In the last analysis causality is the expression of the tendency of being to communicate its perfection to others.

[48] I 41, 1 ad 2: "Remoto igitur motu, actio nihil aliud importat quam ordinem originis secundum quod a causa aliqua vel principio procedit in id quod est a principio".

[49] See our *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Leiden 1990, the last chapter.

[50] Cf. B. Baertschi, "Qu'est-ce qu'une cause?", in *Freiburger Zeitschr.f.Philosophie u.Theologie* 29(1982) 70-92. As Maine de Biran pointed out, our first experience of causality may well be our attempts as babies to modify our environment (*Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie*, Paris 1932, I, 201). M. Merleau-Ponty also believes that the concept of cause originates from our experience of our relationship to the world (*Phénoménologie de la perception*, p.331).

[51] We follow the account given by Aristotle in *Physics* II, ch.2. Aristotle's concept of the efficient cause is rather limited since he sees it as the cause of change rather than as the cause of being.

follows, the being of that which has a cause can be considered in two ways: firstly, absolutely and in this way the form by which a thing actually is, is the cause of being; secondly, insofar as something becomes real from being in potency. And since everything which is in potency is brought to reality by that which is a being in act, it is necessary that there be two other causes, namely matter and the agent which reduces matter from potency to act. Now the action of the agent tends to something determinate, as it proceeds from some determinate principle; for every agent brings about that which fits in with it; that to which the action of the agent tends is called the final cause. Thus it is necessary that there be four causes"[52].

For the sake of completeness we want to note that Albertus Magnus distinguished five kinds of causality: besides the Aristotelian cause of movement he introduced a First Efficient Cause. By this he meant God's creative action, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, is placed by Aquinas under efficient causality[53]. The causality of the act of being with regard to the essence can also be reduced to efficient causality[54].

The four causes are not independent of one another but they form two pairs: on the one hand the efficient and final causes correspond to one another, as the efficient cause is the beginning of a process of causality, whereas the end is what is reached last; while the efficient cause acts because it aims at an end, the end can only exercise its influence through the efficient cause. On the other hand, matter and form belong together: the form gives determination and being, while matter takes on the form[55]. Clearly the causes act mutually upon each other (*causae sunt sibi invicem causae*). Frequently an entity, when considered under different angles, becomes an exponent of different kinds of causality. Thus, for example, the form determines the nature of the substances, while the

[52] *In II Phys.*, l.2, n.240: "Necesse est autem quattuor esse causas. Quia cum causa sit ad quam sequitur esse alterius, esse eius quod habet causam potest considerari dupliciter: uno modo absolute et sic causa essendi est forma per quam aliquid est in actu; alio modo secundum quod de potentia ente fit actu ens. Et quia omne quod est in potentia, reducitur in actum per id quod est in actu ens, ex hoc necesse est esse duas alias causas, scilicet materiam et agentem qui reducit materiam de potentia in actum. Actio autem agentis ad aliquid determinatum tendit, sicut ab aliquo determinato principio procedit; nam omne agens agit quod est sibi conveniens; id autem ad quod tendit actio agentis dicitur causa finalis. Sic igitur necesse est esse causas quattuor".

[53] See E. Gilson, "Pour l'histoire de la cause efficiente", *AHLDMA* 1962, pp.7-31.

[54] Cf. *In V Metaph.*, l.2, n.770 where Aquinas lists the four types of efficient causality (according to Avicenna), scil. *causa perficiens, disponens, adiuvans, concilians*, he adds the following observation: "Ad hoc autem genus causae redicitur *quidquid facit aliquid quocumque modo esse* non solum secundum esse substantiale, sed secundum esse accidentale quod contingit in omni motu".

[55] See *In V Metaph.*, l.2, n.773.

form (at least in the material world) in its turn is dependent on the preliminary dispositions which required this form[56]. As we have argued in a previous chapter substances exercise different forms of causality: while they sustain the accidents in being, they are also a material cause with regard to the accidents insofar as the latter determine the substances to which they belong.

As mentioned above the four genera of causality can be arranged in two pairs (matter and form, efficient and final cause). However, they can also be placed in a genetic order: in and out of matter, the efficient cause brings the form into being, and does so in view of an end[57].

Thus far we have used the term cause without indicating some distinctions. As a matter of a fact, we distinguish between (a) the subject or thing to which the being-a-cause belongs; (b) this "being-a-cause" itself; (c) the relation of the cause to its effect. In this chapter the term cause is used in the strict sense of the word: to act upon something, to be aimed at, to be in potency and to be determination. It is clear that these are four entirely different modes of causality, so that the term "cause" is analogous. But all four kinds of causality have in common the fact that something proceeds from the cause, but the manner in which it does, differs fundamentally. Obviously the concept of effect is also analogous.

The relationship between cause and effect

Scholastic philosophy formulates the relationship between a cause and its effect as follows:

a) The cause precedes the effect. Although it is true that when a cause acts, its effect exists also, it is nevertheless obvious that every cause is prior to its effect, both as a being, which must first exist in order to act, and in the order of nature (the effect results from the action of the cause).

b) Cause and effect are really distinct. This thesis is immediately clear in regard to the efficient and the final cause. With regard to matter and form it appears that their effect is the whole of the existing thing which comes into being from both. Both are part of this whole and are distinguished from it, even if inadequately.

c) A cause as such is more perfect than its effect. Insofar as a cause acts, its effect is dependent on it. However, one must note that in certain

[56] See I 85, 7.

[57] St. Thomas indicates this second order in several texts. Cf. *De princ.naturae*,c.4; *Proemium in Boetii De Trinitate*; *De potentia*, q.3, a.16; *S.Th.* II-II 27, 3; *In II Phys.*, l.5, nn.179-181; *In II Metaph.*, l.2, n.300.

respects the effect can be equally valuable or even more perfect than its cause. Thus e.g. the material substance as a whole is more perfect than its material cause, primary matter. The principle of the greater perfection of the cause was formulated by Plato[58]. One finds it in Cicero, Philoponus, Marius Victorinus, Proclus etc.[59]. We must, however, make a distinction between the main cause and the instrumental cause. The latter need not be more perfect than the effect, since the instrumental action is included in that of the main cause, and so it is transposed to a higher level. In regard to final causality the principle of the greater perfection of the cause must also be limited: although by its nature the end is more perfect than that which it causes, man can make something inferior the goal of his actions.

The axioms with regard to causality

In the preceding pages the concept of causality was studied and it was shown that there is causality in the cosmos. Now we are confronted with the question as to how far this causality extends and according to which rules it occurs. In this connection we distinguish between vertical or transcendental causality and causality on the level of physical beings.

a) By vertical or transcendental causality we mean the producing an effect which shares in a limited way in the perfection the cause possesses by its essence. This causality obtains preeminently in the relationship of God to creatures. In creatures being and the other perfections are always found in a limited degree, while God is being through his own essence; in the plenitude of his being he is the cause of the limited participations which creatures possess. This causal relationship is expressed by means of the following axioms:

aa) That which is the cause of a perfection is this perfection in a higher way than each of the things which through it acquire this perfection. — This principle is obvious because the cause of a perfection is this perfection itself, whereas other things receive it and are not this perfection or do not possess it by themselves[60].

[58] *Philebus* 27 a.

[59] Cicero, *De natura deorum* II, 33, 86: "...ea quae efferant aliquid ex sese perfectiores naturas habere quam ea quae ex his efferantur"; Philoponus, *In Categ.* 50, 8: Marius Victorinus, *De gener.Verbi div.* 1021 BC; Proclus, *Elementatio*, prop.7; 11; 18. See A.C. Lloyd, "The Principle that the Cause is Greater Than Its Effect", *Phronesis* 21(1976) 146.

[60] Aristoteles, *Anal.Post.*72 a 29: "Semper id magis tale est propter quod unumquodque est tale". St. Thomas, I 87, 2 ad 3: "Propter unumquodque, illud magis"; *In Anal.Post.*, l.6: "Quando causa et effectus conveniunt in nomine, tunc illud nomen magis praedicatur de causa quam de effectu".

bb) This insight can also be expressed as follows: that which is the greatest in a given genus is the cause of all things in this genus[61].

cc) The following formulations are also found in St. Thomas' works: All things in a given genus derive from the principle of this genus. That which is first in a given genus is the cause of everything which comes afterwards. That which is through itself (*per se*) is the cause of what which is through another[62]. Particularly these last formulations of the same insight evince what has been called the vertical character of the causality in question here. The issue we are confronting is how to explain that positive perfections, such as being, thinking, goodness occur in varying degrees in different things. This question has already been answered in our analysis of the proofs of the real distinction between being and essence and in the chapter on St. Thomas' doctrine of participation. The insight expressed in these axioms can be summarized as follows: Taken in themselves such perfections as being, beauty, truth should be one and unfold the plenitude of their content. If this is not the case, we are dealing with a participation in such perfections.

The insight, that in each genus of the different perfections there must be a maximum and first, applies primarily to the relationship between God and creatures (although we must keep in mind that here the term genus cannot be understood literally, since God does not belong to the same genus as creatures). But the principle can also be applied to certain causal connections in the created order. For instance, the last end is more of a cause than the intermediate ends or the means employed; the main cause is more of a cause than the instrumental causes[63].

b) In regard to causal process in general (on what some authors call the horizontal level) we formulate the principle of causality: everything that has a beginning or that becomes has a cause. Empedocles was perhaps the first philosopher to state explicitly that nothing comes from nothing[64]. Plato formulated the principle[65] and Aristotle writes that everything that comes into being comes into being due to something

[61] I 2, 3: "Quod dicitur maxime tale in aliquo genere, est causa omnium quae sunt illius generis".

[62] I-II 1, 1: "Omnia quae sunt in aliquo genere, derivantur a principio illius generis"; III 56, 1: "Quod est primum in quolibet genere, est causa omnium eorum quae sunt post"; *In I Anal.Post.*, l.7, n.67: "Semper quod est per se, est causa eius quod est per aliud".

[63] On these principles see J. Gredt, *Elementa Philosophiae aristotelico-thomisticae*[13], II, p.173.

[64] Diels, B 17, 30ff. See J. Klowski, "Der historische Ursprung des Kausalprinzips", *Archiv f.Gesch.d.Philos.* 48(1966) 245-266.

[65] *Symp.* 205b; *Phil.* 26e; *Tim.* 28a.

else[66] and that everything which is moved, is moved by something else[67]. Until the Modern Time the principle was generally accepted by philosophers, although in the Middle Ages Nicholas of Autrecourt held that only the principle of contradiction is evident. Descartes considered the principle of causality an a priori insight[68].

According to John Locke the principle of causality is acquired when we reflect on our own ideas: the idea of beginning is necessarily connected with that of action, while that of action is necessarily attached to that of the agent[69]. Man knows by an intuitive certainty that not-being can no more produce any real being than it can be equal to two right angles"[70]. However, David Hume rejects this view: if we say that what is nothing can produce nothing we presuppose already that something must have a cause[71]. Following in the track of Hume's criticism Kant makes the concepts of cause and effect into subjective a priori categories, so that the principle of causality becomes a subjective law of the mind[72].

Heidegger appears at first sight to deny the principle of causality when he writes that *ex nihilo omne ens qua ens fit*[73]. However, one must take into account that Heidegger is giving a phenomenological description of an experience of ex-sistence, in which one feels oneself as it were hanging above nothingness. Nothingness reveals being, because it is its background and accompanies it. Being, so Heidegger claims, appears as coming from nothingness[74]. This presupposes that nothingness surrounds being and even precedes it. It is a kind of negativity which harms being. The question is whether Heidegger's vision is indeed an authentic experience of being or, rather, an experience which is distorted by a standpoint adopted in advance. It is doubtless correct that an experience is possible of something which does not explain itself, but then this event refers to a cause. As we shall show, all events refer to things which produce them. To ignore this reference has disastrous consequences as to the objective value of one's philosophy. Apparently it is possible in a phenomenological approach to draw a boundary between an experience of becoming (or of contingent being) and the spontaneous insight

[66] *Metaph.* 1049 b 28.

[67] *Phys.* VIII, ch.6 *passim.* Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* III, 1, 1.

[68] *Meditatio* 3. See also Spinoza, *Ethica* I, prop.11: "cuiuscumque rei assignari debet causa seu ratio tam cur existit quam cur non existit".

[69] *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* IV, ch.2.

[70] *Ibid.*,ch.10.

[71] *A Treatise of Human Nature*, I 3, 3.

[72] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft (Werke*, I, p.48; p.58).

[73] *Was ist Metaphysik?*, p.39.

[74] *Sein und Zeit*, pp.180ff.

that this becoming is dependent on a cause. But if one excludes this insight, one no longer is open-minded and unprejudiced with regard to reality. Heidegger's position in respect of causality leads to this pervasive feeling of anxiety which he describes in such detail.

Due to the confrontation with Kant's transcendental philosophy Thomists have increasingly become concerned with the principle of causality and various fundamental questions have arisen in regard to the nature of this principle and its proper expression. We have shown above that we acquire the concept of cause from experience. This holds primarily for the efficient cause but also applies to material, formal and final causes. Now everyone reaches the conviction that whatever comes into being must obviously have a cause: if the harvest of a product is suddenly far below its normal level, if year after year the climate no longer is what it used to be, everyone spontaneously looks for causes of what he observes. This spontaneous conviction and certainty rest on experience to the extent that a) the concepts of cause, action, effect come to us from experience; b) we know from experience that we have to do something to achieve something. —However, the principle of causality is a general law of being and concerns whatever becomes and exists contingently. As a *general* law the principle goes beyond our experience which concerns individual facts. How do we reach the insight into its evident truth?

Between becoming (and contingent existence) on the one hand and cause on the other there is a necessary connection: 'cause' goes toegether coming into being, although not in the sense that cause and effect have the same meaning, but in the sense that 'cause' is connected with coming into being (and contingent existence) like an essential attribute belongs to the essence itself. Thus St. Thomas writes that something which is a being by participation (i.e. which is a limited, becoming or contingent being) cannot exist without being caused, just as a man cannot exist without having the capacity to laugh[75]. In this sense the principle of causality is an analytical judgment (cf. infra), although it is obvious that it rests on an analysis of data of experience.

With regard to the formulation of the principle we find in St. Thomas a multiplicity of expressions, which can be divided into two classes, scil. formulae which concern the process of becoming and others which refer to beings as they exist. For the first group the following may be mentioned: everything which begins has a cause; everything which becomes has a cause; every effect has a cause; everything that is moved is moved by something else[76].

Propositions such as the following belong to the second group: everything contingent has a cause; if something is found in a thing through participation, it must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially; everything that belongs to something which is not of its essence, belongs to it due to some cause, as those things which are not one through themselves, if they are joined, must be united by some cause; it is necessary that all composite and participating things be reduced as to their causes to those things which are such through their essence[77].

The manifold formulae we find in St. Thomas' works raise the question as to whether a single formulation of the principle is possible. The literature of the last fifty years shows a great diversity of opinions in this regard but it is our conviction that all of the formulae given above are valid expressions of the same principle of causality; they are manifestly true, so that to deny them is to be inconsequent. Because the clearest processes of causality are those of change, generation and perishing, the principle of causality will be expressed most easily by a formulation from the first group. It is understood that the expression of a principle of being may not contain a tautology. The sentence "every effect has a cause", despite the appearance to the contrary, is not a tautology provided that one understands under effect that which becomes, so that causality is not already included in the term.

The formulations in the second group are more profound: the only possible answer to the question as to why something contingent, i.e. a thing which is not self-explanatory and need not have been, exists is that it was brought into existence by something else. Otherwise its existence would be without explanation and make no sense and thus be impossible, —assuming that being has a sense. The reply to the question as to why

[75] I 44, 1 ad 1: "Huiusmodi ens non potest esse quin sit causatum, sicut nec homo quin sit risibilis".

[76] I-II 75, 1: "Omne quod incipit habet causam"; "omne quod fit habet causam"; I 110, 3: "Quilibet effectus habet causam"; I 2, 3: "Omne quod movetur, ab alio movetur".

[77] I 2, 3: "Omne contingens habet causam"; I 44, 1: "Si aliquid invenitur in aliquo per participationem, necesse est quod causetur in ipso ab eo cui essentialiter convenit"; *SCG* I 22: "Omne autem quod convenit alicui quod non est de essentia eius, convenit ei per aliquam causam. Ea enim quae per se non sunt unum, si coniunguntur oportet per aliquam causam uniri"; I 3, 4: "Quidquid est in aliquo praeter essentiam eius, oportet esse causatum"; *In II Metaph.*, l.2, n.296: "Necesse est ut omnia composita et participantia reducantur in ea quae sunt per essentiam sicut in causas"; I 3, 7: "Omne compositum causam habet. Quae enim secundum se diversa sunt, non conveniunt in aliquod unum nisi per aliquam causam adunantem ipsa".

a composite being exists is that, because it cannot put itself together, it is caused by something else. If a thing participates in something else, that in which it participates must confer this participation.

Summing up the results of our analysis we give the following formulation of the principle of causality: a thing which is or becomes in such a way that it can also not be has a cause through which it is. We have now rejoined the fundamental insight of St. Thomas' metaphysics; a thing which does not have being from itself, i.e. which is not its existence by its own essence, has its being from something else[78].

In this way the question of the *certainty* of this principle has already been solved: if the principle of causality is denied, one posits the meaninglessness of becoming and contingent existence and so the study of being becomes impossible. As a matter of fact, the denial of the principle implies the denial of the principle of contradiction: one holds that something is (and is meaningful), while at the same time one denies it.

St. Thomas indicates this reduction to the principle of contradiction in several texts: "All principles are reduced to this as to the first principle: it is impossible at the same time to affirm and to deny"[79]. Aquinas also uses the expression "being based upon" or "be contained implicitly in" to refer to the relationship of the other principles to the principle of contradiction[80]. Hence R. Laverdière is not in agreement with St. Thomas when he speaks of an irreducibility of the principle of causality to the principle of contradiction[81]. But it is correct that it cannot be deduced from the latter in an a priori demonstration.

In the light of the above it is clear that formally speaking nothing can be the cause of itself and that the concept of *causa sui* contains a contradiction. Plotinus nevertheless used the expression ἐαυτοῦ ἐνέργημα to define the intellect and its action. He sees the One as the cause of itself, αἴτιον ἐαυτοῦ, and writes that it is παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτόν[82].

Some of the Fathers apparently borrowed this terminology from him in order to apply it to God. For instance, St. Jerome writes that God is

[78] See J. Owens, "The Causal Proposition, Principle or Conclusion?", *The Modern Schoolman* 32(1954-1955) 159-171; 257-270; 323-339, p.339: "The ultimate justification of the causal proposition in its universality and necessity lies not in the contingent or the limited or the participated character of things, nor even precisely in their composition, but rather in the accidental order which all beings—with one exception—have to their being".

[79] II-II 1, 7: "Omnia principia reducuntur ad hoc sicut ad primum: impossibile est simul affirmare er negare".

[80] Cf. I-II 94, 2; II-II 1, 7.

[81] *Le principe de causalité*, Paris 1969, pp.242ff.

[82] *Enneads* VI 8, 14, 42-43.

the source and cause of Himself, while St. Augustine asserts that God is the cause of his wisdom. The Scholastics, however, made it clear that formally speaking nothing can be the cause of itself. Descartes, on the other hand, uses the expression again to refer to God's *esse a se*[83] and Spinoza understands by *causa sui* the being, the essence of which implies existence[84].

The principle of sufficient reason

The principle of sufficient reason is mentioned frequently in connexion with the principle of causality. Leibniz, who excluded the action of one monad on another, and hence the causality of creatures with regard to each other, nevertheless sought the greatest possible clarity in his explanation of the cosmos. Consequently he asserted that things must have a sufficient reason which explains why they exist: no fact can be true, nothing whatever can exist, if there is not an adequate reason why it is so and not otherwise, although in many cases these reasons cannot be known[85]. Leibniz saw the basis for this principle in the relationship of the subject to its predicate[86]. Christian Wolff applied this principle to the order of essences: God is the being in which there is a sufficient reason for the existence of the world.

Via Wolff this principle found its way to the handbooks of Scholastic philosophy. But in recent decades the insight has grown that the principle of sufficient reason is a very vague thesis, in which neither the meaning of 'reason' nor that of 'sufficient' is clear. If by 'reason' (*ratio*) we mean an extrinsic reason, the principle can be considered a somewhat unhappy duplication of the principle of causality[87]. However, if by 'reason' one intends to refer to an intrinsic principle, one is saying that a dog has a reason to be a dog, which is nothing else than a tautology. Only when we speak of God in our human and imperfect manner the concept *ratio* is meaningful, since we can consider one perfection or property as the reason and ground of another: God's perfection is the reason for his goodness and his immutability that for his eternity. But if we speak in

[83] *Meditatio de prima philosophia*, III.

[84] *Ethica*, prima definitio. See H. Schiebeck, "Über die Entstehung der Termini natura naturans und natura naturata", in *Archiv f.Gesch.d.Philosophie* III (1890) 370-378. Cf. K. Hedwig, "Natura naturans" in *Hist. Wörterbuch der Philos.* VI(1984)504-509.

[85] *Monadologia*, 31-32.

[86] *Primae veritates. Opuscules et fragments inédits* (edit. Couturat, p.519).

[87] See E. Gilson, "Les principes et les causes", *Revue thomiste* 52(1952) 39-63: "Il fait figure de doublure. Tout ce qu'on veut lui faire dire s'y trouve déjà dit et beaucoup mieux et surtout de façon plus précise".

such terms we must recall that God's perfections coincide in the unity of God's being which surpasses everything we can think and say about God.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE FOUR GENERA OF CAUSALITY

The Material Cause

In order to produce something one needs materials. This primary experience led many thinkers to see the question of the origin of things chiefly as that of the material from which these things arise. Plato, however, drew attention to the importance of the formal cause and developed the theory of the receptacle which receives the Forms or participates in them. But his vision was not devoid of a certain dualism: the receptable stands as a factor of irrationality over and against the world of Forms. His theory tends to devaluate material reality; becoming itself is not explained and the individual thing loses its unity because it participates in various Forms[1].

Aristotle avoided these shortcomings with his doctrine of matter and form. In order to explain the becoming of material things which is a transition from one being to another (e.g. from wood to ashes), he assumed that there exists a first subject or component of being which first was wood and then lost that determination to become ashes. If one refuses to accept such a subject, there is no longer any continuity between wood and ash, but only a succession of two things which are entirely independent of one another. However, experience shows that the ashes in a fireplace come from the firewood. This forces us to admit that the subject which from wood becomes ashes is itself void, in the sense that it has no determination or content whatever, since that which was its essential and deepest determination, scil. being wood, has disappeared and has been replaced, while it itself remains present so that the transition from one thing into another is possible.

This explanation presupposes as obvious that wood, as a being, is *one* thing. If the subject, of which we are speaking, is completely and entirely indeterminate, it cannot exist on its own. For only things with a positive content exist. If it does not exist on its own, it is not present, prior to existing substances, in the universe as cosmic space, the various parts of

[1] Cf. *Expositio in Librum de causis*, l.3, n.88: "Non igitur Socrates esset vere unum si ab alio haberet quod esset animal et ab alio quod esset homo".

which would be informed[2]. Instead of picturing this primary subject or matter as world space or as one common material substance we must define it as the substrate or matter present in all those things of the physical universe which change into one another; it is a real component of the thing which is capable of substantial change. One may define it as that factor or component in material things which makes substantial change possible. Since such a component (which is called primary matter) must be present in all material substances which change into one another, it has a certain unity which, however, is not more than a unity of order[3].

Matter cannot exist in its own right without any determination whatsoever. It exists only through and under a substantial form, owing to which it is[4]. Consequently matter does not precede form, except in the order of material causality. It is created together with form. St. Thomas rejected most emphatically the doctrine of eternal matter[5].

Matter is an entirely indeterminate substrate. Under the influence of the required efficient causality it can become the various material substances. Hence St. Thomas describes matter as that which, considered for what it is, can take on a form[6]. However, the form is not added to it from the outside. If it were, there would be no real becoming nor would the new being be a strict unity. For this reason the form can only come from matter. Apparently it is present in it; all forms which matter can take on must be present in matter, but this is not a presence as the effect is present in its active principle[7]. The form is only present as a possibility, which coincides confusedly with all other possibilities which lie in matter[8].

Consequently material causality in its original form is mere possibility to become something. It is the most imperfect, most potential causality[9]. Matter as such cannot even exist on its own, but only with and through form[10]. Whenever a form is drawn from matter a composite material whole comes into being[11]. It is this whole which exists. Within

[2] *De ente et essentia*, c.5.
[3] I 66, 2 ad 1: "Materia prima omnium rerum est una unitate ordinis".
[4] I 66, 1 ad 3; *In I Phys.*, l.1.
[5] Cf. E. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, p.156.
[6] *In XII Metaph.*, l.4, n.2465: "Nam materia secundum se sumpta est principium susceptivum formae".
[7] III 32, 4.
[8] See Cajetan, *In I^am*, 90, 2 IV.
[9] I 4, 1.
[10] *In VIII Metaph.*, l.1, n.1687.
[11] *In VII Metaph.*, l.7, n.1423.

this whole matter and form are *entia quo*, i.e. factors or components by means of which the whole exists as this particular thing.

The study of material causality as such has no place at all in metaphysics[12]. Matter is the cause of a particular genus of being, namely changeable things. Metaphysics deals with material things only in an indirect and remote sense, viz. inasmuch as they are beings. However, there are forms of causality which to a certain degree are analogous to material causality and which do belong to the domain of the metaphysician, such as the potentiality of substance with regard to its accidents, of a faculty with regard to its action, and of essence with regard to being. In addition the dispositive material cause is also reduced to material causality. This causality is said of those accidents which dispose a subject to a particular form.

The doctrine of primary matter as described here is difficult to grasp. Primary matter itself, being possibility of form, stands between being (*ens*) and not-being, and can only be thought of through form. For this reason it is not surprizing that in the course of the centuries philosophers frequently yielded to the temptation of replacing it by the much more accessible concept of *materia secunda*, i.e. of something which is already determinate and exists but which can take on further forms.

Especially Avicebron taught the universality of one and the same matter[13]. Some centuries later Giordano Bruno viewed matter as a general receptaculum[14], while Descartes placed the nature of matter in extension and made matter a general principle in the universe[15]. However, as the account above shows, the concept of primary matter is not accessible to the natural sciences; it is acquired by a philosophical analysis of substantial change[16].

The Formal Cause

As we have indicated in the previous chapter Plato was the first philosopher who clearly distinguished formal causality. However, Plato's attention was directed to the transcendental participation of formal contents in the Ideas with the result that he considered the forms as extrinsic principles in which the sensible things participate or which they

[12] *In III Metaph.*, l.4, n.384.
[13] See F. Brunner, *Platonisme et aristotélisme. La critique d'Ibn Gabirol par saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Louvain-Paris 1965, pp.33ff: "L'universalité de la matière".
[14] Cf. his *De la causa, principio e uno*.
[15] *Principia* II 4.
[16] See N.A. Luyten, *Ordo rerum*, Fribourg 1969, pp.64-121.

imitate. Consequently he was unsuccessful in explaining the coming into being of things and did not uphold the unity of and the value proper to material beings.

Aristotle however understood that the essential forms must be in the things as their fundamental determination and actuality. He coined the terms ἐντελέχεια and ἐνέργεια to express this actuality. He also used the words μορφή and εἶδος, meaning the shape, i.e. the inner nature.

The substantial form is in the thing to which it gives its essential determination[17] as the basic factor of determination[18]. It is the nature of the form to determine the subject, i.e. to make it a thing with this essential content. The form gives the specific essence, whereas that which is individually proper to a thing is a further formal differentiation of the specific form in reply to a demand of primary matter as it stands under the dispositions preceding the new substance which comes into being.

Consequently a form does not exist on its own but is the form of something, i.e. it is the formal component in a whole[19]. However, the term form is sometimes used in a broad sense to signify something which exists according to a specific content. Thus we speak of *formae irreceptae* in order to refer to the non-material substances of spiritual beings.

A form itself is not composite but together with matter it constitutes the composite thing. The form is also a cause of limitation because the determination which it gives is a certain limitation. But this is not a negative causality, and the Thomist conception in this regard is utterly opposed to Hegel's assertion that the foundation of all determination is the negation. If a certain limitation is involved in the concept of form, this is not the case with the term act.

The form makes the existing whole become real in the order of substance. Aquinas states repeatedly that the form gives being (*forma dat esse*)[20]; but this does not mean that the form of a thing causes being in the manner of an efficient cause[21]. "The form gives being" in this sense that being follows the form[22], corresponds to the nature of the form and

[17] I 49, 1.

[18] *In III Sent.*, d.27,q.1, a.1.

[19] *De potentia*, q.3, a.11 ad 11.

[20] Cf. *In V Metaph.*, l.2, n.775: "Nam forma dat esse, materia autem recipit". Boethius writes in his *De Trinitate*, c.2 "Omne namque esse ex forma est".

[21] *De ente et essentia*, c.5: "Non autem potest esse quod ipsum esse sit causatum ab ipsa forma rei vel quidditate. Dico autem causatum sicut a causa efficiente". Cf. *Quodl.* I, q.4, a.6 ad 1.

[22] *Compendium theol.*, c.74: "Esse sequitur formam rei"; *Q.d. de anima*, a.14: "Manifestum autem est quod esse per se sequitur formam: unumquodque enim habet esse secundum propriam formam".

is its actuality, so that St. Thomas can say also that the form is to being what light is to shining or whiteness to being white[23]. However, in composite substances being, even if it comes with the form, belongs nonetheless to the substance which consists of matter and form[24]. Within this whole, the form "gives" being and matter receives it, as the form brings matter to actuality, while matter is the substrate of the form[25].

The causality of the form is that of determination[26]. Hence everything which gives determination in one way or another can be reduced to formal causality. For instance, accidents exercise formal causality with regard to the substance which they determine accidentally. Likewise we call form that which specifies our cognitive faculties (*species cognoscibilis*)[27]. Aquinas himself calls being (*esse*) that which is most formal in reality because it makes a thing that what it is[28].

What is called *causalitas exemplaris* is also reduced to formal causality. The expression means the influence of the example, the plan or form in likeness to which something comes into being. St. Thomas describes this as "the form which imitates something on the basis of the intention of an agent who sets himself a particular goal"[29]. The form which is a model remains outside the thing which becomes, but it nonetheless influences its nature via the action of the efficient cause.

The Efficient Cause

Efficient causality is the most obvious kind of causality. Man is directly conscious of his own actions and of the causal influence of the world outside himself. Aristotle defines the efficient cause as the principle which first causes movement and rest[30]. In his definition Aristotle excludes the consideration of the final cause (whose causality is even prior to that of the efficient cause), and he places himself on the level of the coming into being of things, e.g. of changes or the forced rest of something. He simply leaves the cause of being out of consideration.

[23] *SCG* II, c.54; *S.Th.* I 104, 1.

[24] *L.c.*: "Per hoc enim in compositis ex materia et forma dicitur forma principium essendi quia est complementum substantiae cuius actus est ipsum esse". In man, however, being is immediately connected with man's immaterial form.

[25] *In V Metaph.*, l.2, n.775.

[26] Cf. I 47, 1: "Distinctio rerum est per formas proprias".

[27] I 85, 4.

[28] *Q.d. de anima*, a.1 ad 17; I 7, 1.

[29] *De veritate*, q.3, a.1. See G. Girardi, *Metafisica della causa esemplare in San Tommaso d'Aquino*, Torino 1954.

[30] *Phys.* 194 b 29ff.

Avicenna was the first to observe that Aristotle's *causa movens* does not explain the origin of the being of things[31]. Following his suggestions medieval philosophers listed frequently a further extrinsic principle of being in addition to the cause of movement[32]. For example, in a digression in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics* Albert the Great emphasizes that there must be a cause of being which is not a formal but an efficient cause[33]. St. Albert adds that some speak of five kinds of causes distinguishing two efficient causes[34]. The 37th and 38th of the theses condemned by bishop Tempier in 1277 assert on the contrary, that God is only an efficient cause in a metaphorical sense[35].

St. Thomas accepts Avicenna's application of efficient causality to God: God is the efficient cause of being[36]. In his *Commentary on the Metaphysics* he translates the Aristotelian definition of the efficient cause, broadening its meaning somewhat by using the term *permutatio* instead of *motus* in order to make room for that metaphysical causality which is the creation of being and takes place without a change[37].

When dividing the kinds of efficient causality we exclude from our consideration the *causalitas per accidens*: by a cause *per accidens* we understand a factor which happens to be connected with a cause by chance, e.g. the composer who flogs someone is a human being who is also a musician: as a musician he is a cause *per accidens* of what happens; again, someone who is shooting deer and through error kills a human being, is accidentally the cause of the death of a human being. In the following we consider only the efficient cause *per se*[38]. We distinguish:

[31] *Metaphysica*, tr. VI, c.1. Cf. E. Gilson, "Avicenne et les origines de la notion de cause efficiente", in *Atti del XII Congresso intern. di filos.*, vol.9, pp.121-130; id., "Pour l'histoire de la cause efficiente", in *AHLDMA* 1962, 7-31.

[32] Cf. *Siger de Brabant. Questions sur la Physique d'Aristote* (Les Philosophes Belges, XV), edit. Ph. Delhaye, Louvain 1941, pp.101f.

[33] *Metaphysica*, liber V, tr.1, c.3 (Geyer 213, 62ff).

[34] *O.c.*, p.214, 41ff.: "Sicut etiam ex his quae dicta sunt, qualiter quidam dixerunt causas esse quinque, eo quod efficientem quam sequitur esse, diviserunt a causa movente inquantum est movens; quidam autem quattuor esse dixerunt eo quod una in communi est ratio efficientis et moventis et huius est facere esse quod non est".

[35] See R. Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés à Paris le 7 mars 1277*, Paris-Louvain 1977, pp.76ff.

[36] *In I Sent.*, d.7, q.1, a.1, ad 3; *De veritate*, q.2, a.3 ad 20: "...quamvis agens naturale, ut Avicenna dicit, non sit causa nisi fiendi; cuius signum est quod eo destructo non cessat esse rei sed solum fieri; agens tamen divinum quod est influens esse rebus, est causa essendi, quamvis rerum constitutionem non intret; et tamen est similitudo principiorum essentialium, quae intrant rei constitutionem et ideo non solum cognoscit fieri rei, sed esse eius et prima principia eius".

[37] *In V Metaph.*, l.2, n.765: "...principium permutationis et quietis".

[38] Aristotle mentions repreatedly a division of efficient causes of Platonic origin (*Laws* X, 888e-889a), for instance in *Phys.n.*198 a 5; *Metaph.* 1032 a 12f.; 1070 a6-7; *Eth.Nic.* 1112 a31-33: certain things take place by nature, others by art and others again by chance. Aquinas comments on this and remarks that a cause is either *per se* or *per accidens*: if it is *per se*, it is either intrinsic to what it produces (nature) or extrinsic (art); if *per accidens*, it is chance or good fortune (*In VII Metaph.*, l.6, n.1381f.).

a) *causa aequivoca* and *causa univoca*. In the *causa aequivoca* which as the term indicates is not of the same essence as the effect, the effect is present in a higher manner. Although this cause is itself essentially different, it can nevertheless be the cause of the specific essence it produces. A *causa univoca*, on the other hand, has the same specific essence as its effect. Because nothing formally causes itself this cause does not produce the specific essence, but the individual being[39]. The concept of *causa aequivoca* is especially used to indicate that God is a cause who absolutely surpasses his effects[40].

b) *causa principalis* and *causa instrumentalis*. The principal cause makes the effect by its own power, while the instrumental cause does so through the power which it receives (by way of a passing entity) from the principal cause. The principal cause is divided by St. Thomas into first and second cause. The *Causa Prima*, God, is dependent on no-one in its action, whereas second causes remain dependent on God in their being and causality although they do act through their own power.

c) *causa proxima* and *causa remota*. The former is in immediate contact with the effect, while the latter brings about its effect through the intervention of one or more other causes.

d) *causa totalis* and *causa partialis*. While the former brings about the whole effect, the latter produces it together with other causes as, for example, in the case of the propulsion of an aeroplane by several engines together.

e) *causa universalis* and *causa particularis*. The latter produces the individual effects in the cosmos, while the former extends its influence to all process and is responsible for the coming-into-being of the specific essences.

f) physical and moral causes. While the former are agents in the physical world, the latter express the influence of one human individual on another, urging the other person to a certain course of action. To give someone advice or encouragement is to exercise a moral influence.

In the previous chapter it has been shown that there is efficient causality in the world. What is entirely new in St. Thomas' treatment of this topic is his distinction between the First Cause and second causes.

[39] I 13, 5 ad 1.

[40] Cf. I 4, 2.

The First Cause is a cause in an entirely different manner to *causae secundae*. As will be shown in volume II, created things do not have being from themselves, and hence cannot transmit it as their own possession. Being is the effect of God[41]. Every created efficient cause is continuously dependent on God for its existence, its power and its actions, because their being and action exist only in and through God[42].

If God gives being, and being is that which is most intimate in things, this causality of God is not to be thought of as something which accompanies the actions of creatures, but must be seen as a causal influence of God on their being and actions in the very centre of things[43]. As God gives being and action to all things, he acts in everything[44]. When a cause is of a higher order and more powerful, it penetrates its effect all the more. While the created cause primarily produces what is limited in the being of the effect, God acts on the deepest level and gives being[45].

The *instrumental cause* is a subordinate cause which is moved by a higher cause which uses it to produce a certain effect. An instrument has its own action or properties which are used by the main cause. Its action is associated with that of the main cause, which is on a higher level; it constitutes one activity with the causality of the main cause. For this reason an instrument produces a higher effect than it could do on its own. The bundle of hairs in Rembrandt's paint-brush on their own could never bring about such sublime effects as are the canvasses of the famous painter.

This example is important for it helps us analyze the manner of action of instrumental causality. The effect is brought about by the instrument with which the effect is in immediate contact. The activity of the instrument itself in the example given is the extremely refined application of dashes of paint on a surface. This activity proper to the paint-brush is used by the painter in order to paint a magnificent scene on the canvas or other material. Frequently the painter will not even touch the

[41] *SCG* III, c.66: "Est igitur esse proprius effectus primi agentis, scilicet Dei".

[42] *De potentia*, q.3, a.7: "Et hoc modo etiam oportet dicere quod Deus est causa omnis actionis rei naturalis". See our *The Philosophical Theology of Sr. Thomas Aquinas*, the last chapter.

[43] *L.c.*: "et ideo potest dicere quod Deus in qualibet re operatur".

[44] *In II Sent.*, d.1, q.1, a.4: "Solus Deus immediate operatur et res singulae operationes habent, per quas causae proximae rerum sunt. Harum tamen causa etiam Deus est, magis intime in eis operans quam aliae causae moventes, quia ipse est dans esse rebus"; *In II Sent.*, d.1, q.1, a.1: "Virtus sua (scil.Dei) est sicut medium coniungens virtutem cuiuslibet causae secundae cum suo effecto".

[45] *SCG* II, c.21: "...Esse autem est causatum primum quod ex ratione suae communitatis apparet. Causa igitur propria essendi simpliciter est agens primum et universale, quod Deus est. Alia vero agentia non sunt causae essendi simpliciter sed causae essendi hoc".

canvas with his hands and thus the entire effect comes "from the brush". Yet the brush on its own can never produce a painting. Apparently the painter communicates his intention and power to the brush, so that the latter can 'fleetingly' (*transeunter*), namely for as long as the painter uses it, bring about a higher effect. From an ontological point of view the brush receives an accidental determination which is higher than what it possesses itself and which is a participation in the skill and artistic intuition of the painter. As stated above, there are not two actions, but one[46]: the main cause acts and achieves the effect with the aid of the instrument. The causal influence communicated to the instrument by the main cause is called instrumental power (*vis instrumentaria*), a power which is 'fleetingly' present in the instrument.

Instruments are divided into mechanical, natural and supernatural instruments. Examples of the first group are tools, of the second group the chemical and physical factors in the organism which are made subservient to the vital operations of the living being; in the process of knowledge the representations of the imagination which yield the material for the formation of the concepts, and the *cogitativa* which makes judgments on reality by the intellect possible, are also natural instruments. As an example of supernatural instruments the Scholastics mention the sacraments.

Apart from these kinds of instruments in the strict sense of the word, we can use the term in a broader meaning referring to a man who is subservient to others (*instrumentum morale*) or when denoting that which leads us to the knowledge of something (*instrumentum logicum*).

Besides instrumental causality the *universal cause* must also be mentioned. The following consideration gives access to this concept: The universe is not a set of unconnected beings, but a world in which things are ordered towards one another and towards their end. Whatever happens anywhere in the universe has a repercussion on everything else; all causal processes are connected. This becomes clear if we think of the origin of life and the continued existence of the various species of living beings. The entire cosmos must contribute to this, since the conditions under which life is possible depend on a considerable number of cosmic processes and factors. We speak here of a universal causality which creates in the solar system, in the atmosphere, in water and on earth, the conditions under which life of so many kinds remains possible. St. Thomas

[46] See J.-H. Nicolas, "La causalité des sacrements", in *Revue thomiste* 62(1962) 517-570, pp.540-545.

placed this universal causality in the sun and partially also in the stars; but it seems better to attribute it to the entire cosmos[47].

It is obvious that material things such as clusters of stars can never realize the unbelievable complex conditions necessary for the production of life, if they are not moved and directed by God's plan. Therefore, cosmic matter and energy are an instrument of God, although they do retain their own actions.

In the effect produced by the efficient cause we distinguish various aspects, as has been indicated: God gives being, while the created cause produces primarily that which is particular to this effect and being only secondarily, viz. insofar as the created cause is used as an instrument by God. Furthermore we must make a distinction in the effect between its individual and specific aspects. An individual being which reproduces itself cannot make its specific essence: if so, it would also cause itself as it has itself this same specific essence. On the other hand, the specific essence is dependent on a large number of factors in the cosmos which make it possible. Thus one must say that the individual efficient cause makes this individual arise in this matter, but that general cosmic causality, as an instrument of God's action, makes the specific essence. Accordingly the causality of the individual is not juxtaposed to this universal causality, but it occurs within it as a part and particularization of it[48].

The Final Cause

The efficient cause produces an effect in which it expresses something of itself in one way or another. We can say also that efficient causes produce a likeness to themselves. This is clear in the case of the reproduction of living beings[49]. St. Thomas formulates the general principle that every agent produces something like itself[50]. The truth of the axiom "omne agens agit sibi simile" follows from the nature of causality itself which corresponds to the specific essence of the efficient cause and must express it: the active forces in the different beings act with the support of their substantial forms. In man, efficient causality is

[47] A recent attempt to demonstrate the need of a universal cause was made by J.E. Loveloch, *Gaia. A New Look at Life on Earth*, Oxford 1979, pp.33ff.

[48] Concerning the issue of universal causality see *Expositio in libr. de div. nom.*, c.4, l.21, n.550; I 45, 8 ad 3; I 79, 4; *SCG* III, c.99; IV, c.7. On the cause which produces the specific essence see *SCG* III, c.65; II, c.21; *In I Sent.*, d.12, q.1, a.2, ad 2; I 13, 5 ad 1; 104, 1.

[49] *De anima* 415 a 26ff.

[50] See I 110, 2; 115, 1 and I 45, 8 ad 2.

also the expression of that which is present in his faculties of knowing and striving. By his knowledge and will he gives himself a form on which his further actions are based. The effect which he produces comes under the end which he sets himself. As other agents do, man also acts in order to attain something ("omne agens agit propter finem"). Otherwise the action of the agent would be without content and determination and would not do one thing any more than anything else[51].

This confronts us with the question as to what design and purposiveness mean. In Plato's *Phaedo* 98e Socrates explains why he is still in prison and why he does not wish to seize the opportunity to flee. It is not because his legs cannot carry him, but because he wishes to do what is good. The good determines his action. The 'end' recognized by Plato as a cause is analyzed philosophically by Aristotle. He defines the end as that for the sake of which something is done. Aristotle distinguishes between an end for the sake of which (the so-called *finis cuius gratia*) and the end which is someone's benefit (*finis cui*)[52]. He emphatically argues that every action has an end since it strives for a good. After all the good is that for which all things strive[53].

Aristotle discovers the highest possible finality in nature: although failures do occur in some natural processes, Nature does nothing without reason[54]. In the *Physics* I, c.8 Aristotle develops this insight further and refutes the view of Empedocles (and the Atomists) that living beings are a product of chance factors. His arguments are the following: 1) One cannot attribute constant phenomena to chance; 2) The development of a living being has a particular end; this development however, is the outcome of natural processes which have their source in the essence itself; thus this very essence is directed to an end; 3) Man imitates nature in his work; in fact there is always an end in human activity; hence nature is also aiming at an end; 4) Some animals display purposeful action, e.g. bees and ants.

Aristotle is aware of the fact that animals and plants which act in view of an end, have no knowledge of this end[55]. This implies that this finality is different from that in human life. Moreover, finality in nature is added to a substrate of mechanical causality.

Until modern times Aristotle's view was generally accepted, but it

[51] I-II 1, 2. See R. Alvira, *La noción de finalidad*, Pamplona 1978.

[52] *Metaph.* 1072 b 1-3; *De anima* 415 b 2-3.

[53] *Metaph.* 1049 a 3.

[54] *De part.anim.* 645 a 23-25.

[55] *Phys.* 199 a 20-21.

encountered opposition from the nominalists. Ockham writes that it is doubtful whether beings which have no knowledge, act purposively. His view is that these things act according to the necessary data of their respective natures[56]. The concept of the final cause used by St. Thomas and Aristotle is much broader than that of Ockham and it does not imply that a being ordains itself towards an end with knowledge and by choice.

The revolution in the sciences which occurred in the time of Galileo and Descartes, namely the rejection of Aristotle's cosmology and the rise of mechanism in the explanation of the world, led to the rejection of final causality as a factor of significance for scientific study. Descartes excluded final causality from his investigations[57]. Francis Bacon followed him in this: "The use of final causes connected with the rest in physical investigation has hampered the strict and industrious investigation of all real and physical causes and led man to dwell upon these satisfying explanations which are beautiful in appearance, and this led to a halt and prejudice to further discoveries"[58]. Bacon concedes that final causes have their proper place in metaphysics: in physics, however, they are obstacles and prevent the ship from sailing further.

Spinoza attributes the idea of finality to the fact that men seek their own advantage and then transfer to nature what they do themselves; but nature has no goal whatever and all final causes are merely human fictions[59]. Kant rejects also the use of teleology in the sciences: phenomenal reality is contingent, and hence the objectivity of final causality cannot be demonstrated. Furthermore, no proof of God's existence is possible which is based upon the finality in the world[60].

Finality is excluded by numerous scientists[61], while others want to retain it in some way or other. It is obvious that in a physics or a chemistry based on atomism final causality cannot be absorbed conceptually. But since the conclusions reached by these scientists give access only to an aspect of reality, this constitutes no argument whatever against the presence of finality in the world. A careful observer sees a considerable

[56] *Summulae in libros Physicorum:* "...de aliis quae non agunt per cognitionem et voluntatem magis dubium est an agant propter finem et utrum in talibus sit ponenda causa finalis...; in inanimatis non est causa finalis quia sunt mere agentia ex necessitate naturae nihil praetendentia".

[57] *Princ.philos.* I, 28.

[58] *The Advancement of Learning*, II 7, 7; III 4. Cf. *De augmentu scient.* III 5: "Causarum finalium inquisitio sterilis est et tamquam virgo Deo consecrata nihil parit".

[59] *Ethica*, pars I, appendix: "Naturam finem nullum sibi praefixum habere et omnes causas finales nihil nisi humana esse figmenta".

[60] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, II, II, 2, c.3, 6.

[61] See, for example, Jacques Monod, *Le hasard et la nécessité*, Paris 1970.

degree of design not merely in living beings, but also in the physical world. Difficulties are moreover caused by the fact that some conceive final causes as efficient causes.

In order to find the solution to the question of finality we must first analyze the concept of the end. The end is that which an action seeks to attain, or, in Aristotle's words, that for which things do everything else. The end is the first cause, as it is responsible for the start and occurrence of the action. By "everything else" in the definition Aristotle denotes the actions and activities which are the means or intermediary directed to the the final end. The final end is the end in the most proper sense and is referred to as the "end for which things strive" (*finis qui; finis cuius gratia*). As we have indicated, we distinguish also an "end for someone" (*finis cui*), namely the person for the sake of whom we strive for something, and "the end through which" (*finis quo*), i.e. the activity through which we attain the end.

We know from experience that we act in order to attain an end. If we had not chosen a particular end, we would not have performed these actions. Therefore a real causal influence on our action proceeds from this end. This holds true for man. With regard to other things we distinguish between living beings and anorganic nature; we will show that for both groups purposeful actions exist:

a) We see that nature is organized in such a way that living beings are equipped in the best manner for a specific degree of life[62]. Animals act in the same way, under changing circumstances, over many generations, so that their activity has a pre-set direction. Even such deviations as malformations appear to be a reaction on the part of the organism, when damage arises, to maintain as much life as is still possible. Modern biology also points out the immense complexity of the millions of processes which take place in an organism and remain in equilibrium, with the result that on each occasion the same effect is attained, namely this particular kind of living being. This would not be possible if the whole were not directed towards the attainment of this end.

b) Anorganic substances act only in an analogous sense and it is difficult to say much about their activities. We do ascertain that the cosmos "cooperates" in order to realize the very complex conditions necessary for the coming into being and maintenance of life; the whole of this process is so complex that chance has to be excluded from it. Furthermore we see that physical phenomena, such as earthquakes,

[62] *In II Phys.*, l.12, n.252.

hurricanes etc. actually fulfill a particular and meaningful role in the physical world. Hence we say that there is design in the anorganic world[63].

The end corresponds to the definition which we have given of a cause in general. However, there is a particular difficulty here since in many cases the end does not yet exist but is only reached through action. How can something which has still to be realized determine action? The reply to this question is that in the case of man the end apparently acts through being present in man's knowledge and will. The action of the end begins when a person begins to perform actions which tend to realize the end. The influence which the end has rests on its desirability. The activity of the end is not that of an efficient cause, but consists in being desired or loved. Since the end itself "does nothing", it does not change and in this sense it is an unmoved mover[64].

The knowledge of the end is the condition necessary for its causal influence, namely for its being pursued. This confronts us with the question as to how finality can be present in the cosmos, since the lower beings either have no knowledge whatever or else do not know the good as such. Nonetheless it is a fact that plants and animals pursue certain ends in what they do: they gather food, dig a hole, defend themselves; they develop and keep themselves alive. "The end" is on each occasion the final point in an activity which is subservient to the whole. Plants and animals have this activity by nature.

If we inquire how this is possible, the answer is that they are directed towards the end by another[65]. The final causality which we encounter in the activity of nature shows that an intellect has ordained it to purposeful action. Hence finality in nature is the starting point for the teleological proof of God's existence. From this it is clear that the purposeful action of animals, plants and anorganic nature is different from that of man[66]; yet this finality is no illusion or anthropomorphism.

As to the extent of final causality, we know that every action must have a particular character and must be aimed at something. If this orientation towards something specific were not present, the action would be without content, i.e. it would not be an action at all. Thus we

[63] *SCG* III, c.16: "Finis igitur uniuscuiusque rei est eius perfectio. Perfectio autem uniuscuiusque rei est bonum ipsius. Unumquodque igitur ordinatur in bonum sicut in finem". Cf. III, c.22: "Unumquodque tendens in suam perfectionem, tendit in divinam similitudinem".

[64] Cf. J. de Finance, "La notion de bien", in *Gregorianum* 39(1958) 5-42.

[65] Cf. I-II 1, 2.

[66] See also N. Hartmann, *Die Aufbau der realen Welt*, ch.2.

can posit that every agent acts for the sake of an end[67]. This principle is known to us by itself (*per se notum*): it follows evidently from the analysis of the terms[68]. However, it is not a tautology[69]. One cannot object against this that inanimate things do not act in view of an end: it is true that they do not "intend" to reach an end, but in their activity they do attain something determinate. This activity is the fulfillment of their being; it aims at what to them is an end, even if they do not know it. Moreover, when we consider such activity in the perspective of the whole cosmos, it always has a particular function to fulfill. There is, in fact, a marvelous collaboration of things and a functional adaptation of the one to the other. This adaptation implies that they are directed by another being to certain specific ends[70].

One might perhaps object that a good number of cosmic events appear to occur without any finality, e.g. earthquakes or devastating hurricanes. The answer is that at a certain level (e.g. that of geology and meteorology) these "disasters" are functional, although not in regard to certain groups of people. This latter aspect is rather their causality *per accidens*. This additional aspect of such an activity may be connected with it either from the side of the effect or from the side of the cause itself[71].

Chance

Both in nature as well as in human life there are events which at least from certain points of view appear to occur without finality. If it is a question of something advantageous for us, such as when we receive an inheritance from a person unknown to us, we have no difficulty in accepting this. But in the case of an unforseeable accident or disaster we feel bitterly the absence of purpose. In such cases we speak of good luck and bad luck. Aristotle gives as an example of a chance event the case of someone who after a hearty meal went to drink from a stream in the

[67] I-II 1, 2: "Agens autem non movet nisi ex intentione finis. Si enim agens non esset determinatum ad aliquem effectum, non magis ageret hoc quam illud; ad hoc quod determinatum effectum producat, necesse est quod determinetur ad aliquid certum quod habet rationem finis".

[68] Cf. *In I Post.Anal.*, l.5, n.50; *In IV Metaph.*, l.5, n.595.

[69] Cf. L. de G. Vicente Burgoa, "Omne agens agit propter finem. El principio de finalidad en Santo Tomás de Aquino", in *Atti del VIII Congresso tomistico internazionale*, V, Città del Vaticano 1982, 829-341.

[70] *SCG* III, c.3; I-II 17, 8.

[71] See *In II Phys.*, l.8, n.214: "Causa per accidens dicitur omne illud quod coniungitur causae per se, quod non est de ratione eius". See also *In V Metaph.*, l.3, n.789. See G.P. Klubertanz, "Sr. Thomas' Treatment of the Axiom 'Omne Agens Agit Propter Finem'" in Charles J. O'Neil (edit.), *An Etienne Gilson Tribute*, Milwaukee 1959, 101-117.

vicinity of which robbers had hidden themselves. The man was robbed and murdered. Here there are two series of purposeful actions: the robbers who wait for victims at a vantage-point to themselves and the search for good drinking water when one is thirsty. We speak of chance because the coincidence of these two series of causally connected events is unintentional. Being murdered in this way is unintentional and is an event *per accidens*, i.e. it is not an action which constitutes an absolute unity[72]. For us "chance" is at work here, but not for the First Cause whose causality embraces all events[73].

Can the past return?

A final question to retain our attention is whether something that has been can return to existence. In Western thought the first clear formulation of the doctrine of a cyclical return is found in Empedocles, who distinguishes in the cosmic processes between a period when Hate dominates (which disperses the elements) and an era in which Love has the upper hand and establishes peace and harmony. Moreover there are two intermediary periods. In Plato's *Statesman* one finds a theory of a cyclical return of cosmic constellations. Aristotle accepts, albeit on a very limited scale, some cyclical processes. An example of an extreme belief in the return of the same people and situations is found in Eudemus of Rhodes[74]: he holds that after many years he will again be teaching the same students with his teacher's baton. In this connection one may also mention the Stoic theory of the restoration of all things.

In the Middle Ages Gilbert of La Porrée and William of Auvergne taught that things can return from the past[75]. In the fourteenth century reflections on God's omnipotence led to a renewed discussion. Gregory of Rimini has the view that God's power is not limited to what we call the future[76].

St. Thomas observes that God can do everything which is not contradictory in itself. It would be contradictory to say that Socrates is sitting down and standing up at the same time. Now the past is that which has been, and it would be a contradiction to say that it has not been[77]. In

[72] I 115, 6.
[73] I 116, 1; *In I Peri Hermeneias*, l.14, n.187.
[74] Fragm.88 Wehrli (= Simplicius, *In Phys.* 732, 23ff.).
[75] Respectively in *In Boetii De Trinitate: PL* 64,1287 b; 1289 a and *Summa aurea* I, c.11, qq.5-6.
[76] Cf. W. Courtenency, "John of Mirecourt and Gregory of Rimini in Whether God can Undo the Past", in *Recherches de théol. ancienne et médiévale* XL (1973) p.147.
[77] I 25, 4.

reply to the question whether things which existed formerly can return Aquinas writes that natural causes cannot bring this about, as they act in time and time and movement are now different from what they were; hence the same effect numerically will not come back again. But because God's causality is beyond time and change, God can make that a thing which has ceased to be, comes into existence once again[78].

This applies to things like substances and some accidents. But that which intrinsically implies succession, i.e. a process of change, can never return as numerically the same change or movement, since a movement which is numerically one, is precisely a movement which is not interrupted; if it is interrupted, its continuation is no longer the same movement[79].

[78] *Quodl.* IV, a.5.
[79] *Loc.cit.*